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CASTLE GREGORY;

A STORY

OF THE

WESTERN RESERVE WOODS

IN THE OLDEN TIME.

and by Caroline Riddle

BY THE AUTHOR OF BART RIDGELEY, THE HOUSE OF ROSS,
HART AND HIS BEAR, ETC.

CLEVELAND, OHIO:
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Mass.

TO ALICE, AND NELLIE, AND EMMA,

THE THREE MAIDENS WHOSE PRESENCE GAVE INTEREST TO THE STORY TELLING OF
"HART AND HIS BEAR," THESE PAGES ARE INSCRIBED.

A boy grows to manhood, quite alone, in the woods, becoming what Hart might have been. One day, in the heart of the forest, he meets a maiden as lovely as one of themselves. The burden of the tale is to note the unfolding of the young man's character, under the influence of her presence.

Washington, May 1st.

Affectionately,
A. G. R.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER.	PAGE.
<hr style="width: 10%; margin: 10px auto;"/>	
CHAPTER I.—	
Tells When the Castle was Built, and of its Chief and Hero.....	3
CHAPTER II.—	
What Happened at the Pond, with Other Matters of Interest.....	9
CHAPTER III.—	
Roy Talks of Shaving, and Quotes the "Fairy Queen" to Cora.....	17
CHAPTER IV.—	
The Judge Pronounces a Judgment.....	29
CHAPTER V.—	
Cora Asks to be Excused—Roy Goes a Hunting.....	37
CHAPTER VI.—	
Cora Has an Interview with the Old Border Woman of the Castle, and Offers Tribute	47
CHAPTER VII.—	
Roy Draws a Line and Several Inferences.....	58
CHAPTER VIII.—	
Roy Meets an Eastern Lover.....	66
CHAPTER IX.—	
The Rescue.....	76
CHAPTER X.—	
What Cora Told Roy Finally.....	83
CHAPTER XI.—	
The Day After Not Left to the Imagination.....	90
CHAPTER XII.—	
The Falling Curtain.....	98

CASTLE GREGORY.

BY A. G. RIDDLE.

CHAPTER I.

TELLS WHEN THE CASTLE WAS BUILT, AND
OF ITS CHIEF AND HERO.

It is historic that ancient Connecticut, under a grant of the Second Charles, claimed a territory of over sixty miles in breadth, running west to the mythical "South Sea" of that time. The title was none of the best, but when she relinquished it to the infant republic, she was permitted to reserve so much of the land as lay between the south shore of Lake Erie, and the 41st degree north, running one hundred and twenty miles west, from the Pennsylvania line. This now constitutes the eleven counties of the northeast corner of Ohio. The placing of these three million acres of land on the market produced a great movement of the New England people into the Ohio woods, during the first quarter of the century, not without influence on the State and the Republic. So much Puritan Massachusetts and Connecticut transplanted in the briefest time, in the then farthest known West.

The Cuyahoga is the most considerable of the many rivers of this favored region. Gathering its first waters almost from the lake itself, near the eastern end of the Reserve, it makes directly south from it, gathering confluents as it goes, as if intending to break or find a way through the rocky divide between the basins of the lakes and the Valley of the Ohio, and carry her waters to the Mississippi, instead of the St. Lawrence, as does

her sister, Mahoning. It makes its way across the sandstone ridge of the first rapids, but is turned southwesterly, and finally, with a sharp angle, is forced to head directly back toward the lake to which her waters are delivered thirty or forty miles west and up from its infant springs and rills.

Curiously enough, within this irregular semicircle, described by the Cuyahoga, rises her smaller and more beautiful sister Chagrin, taking her first supplies almost from the same fountains, and running a shorter career, turns back upon her first course, and empties her once limpid tide but a few miles from her rise.

Covered with one of the heaviest and most beautiful forests of the middle of the continent, with an abundant rain fall and small evaporation, both bore twice the volume of water to the parent lake that now finds its passage in their shrunken channels.

An old Indian trail crossed the Cuyahoga at a point near its bend remotest from the coast, extending from points on the lake to the native villages in the interior. Just above the crossing, on the northern bank, was the scene of my history, which, though it recounts incidents of the earliest of pioneer days, is idyllic somewhat, and touches few of the more striking incidents of border life and adventure.

The first rude collection of buildings—the forest home of the proprietor, his laborers and hangers-on, were constructed, not without reference to defense against Indian war-

fare, and came to be known as Castle Gregory. The central and principal structure of very considerable extent was solidly built of squared logs, carried up two high stories with openings or loop holes, for rifle practice, on occasion. It was never the scene of siege and sally, though Indian skirmishing had flashed in the forest neighborhood before the bloody defeat of the hostiles, by Wayne, on the Maumee, a few years prior to its erection.

In the first years of the century, embittered by political disappointments, and meeting with pecuniary losses, John Gregory, of Massachusetts, then in middle life, made a considerable purchase of the Reserve lands, visited the region soon after the allotment to him, selected the site for a residence, had the lines run and marked, and secured a party of borderers from Western Pennsylvania, who, with their axes and rifles, made a very determined impression on the forest. He went into the woods to stay. A man of vigorous and commanding frame, of strong will, shrewd and keen in intellect, a college graduate, bred to the law, though little practiced in the courts, he had many qualities fitting him for the leadership of men; with the hardihood and sagacity requisite for life beyond the border, as his first years in the Ohio woods were. Five years of determined warfare on the savagery of nature reduced it to a condition fit for the residence of his wife and young son.

During these years there was less communication between Ohio and New England than now between either and Alaska. He returned to find his wife in the last stages of consumption. Deploring his long absence, he tenderly cherished the residue of her life, and buried her. From the shock of her loss he never recovered the wonted tone of his former spirit, shaded as that had been by crosses and losses. The free life in the woods

had unfitted him for life in New England. There was now nothing to detain him in the East. He purchased stock and draft horses and cattle, loaded three or four wagons, mounted his son on a strong, bony young horse, himself on a powerful charger, and made his final exit from the older civilization.

The boy was then thirteen, tall of his age, high-shouldered, and hollow-chested, with the large, dreamy eyes of his mother, and something of her languor and passiveness. She was fanciful, and named her child after a hero of romance who had enlisted her admiration, and she called him Fitzroy. To his father he was Roy. During the years of that parent's absence he was the sole companion of his mother, who was his entire world. His education was cared for, and, with his active brain and passive manner, he was an apt scholar, and became a great reader. A youth by temperament, education, and association, more unfitted for border life was never carried into the woods. To him the journey into the forest was a rude but needed awakening from the torpor of grief into which the death of his mother plunged him. Undemonstrative, shy, and uncomplaining, tender and clinging in his nature and affections, he soon became attached to his strong, homely horse, destined to become famous in the new West. With his mother's fancy in names he called him Red Cross. The 600 miles of constant journeying, occupying seven or eight weeks, for the slow passage of the caravan, was a severe strain on the boy's endurance, and its effect marked. Instead of sinking under it and being transferred to a wagon, where appliances for his ease were carried, he daily grew in strength and hardihood. His father regarded him as short lived, fearing that he inherited a fatal malady from his mother, and so languid, shy, and reticent had he

found him, that he had very unfavorable impressions of his capacity, and cherished but moderate expectations of him, should he reach a manhood of ordinary vigor. The new scenes, the labor and exertions of the journey appealed to the latent resources of his unapprehended nature, and quickened the development of qualities which in a few years were to make him largely useful in frontier life, and carry him successfully across the intervening time to robust and beautiful young manhood.

Curious even beyond boyhood, his faculty for observation was aroused to notice, remember, and finally study the new and interesting objects of nature around him. His mind was stored with useful reading, while his imagination was filled with legends of romance, the exploits of knights in the service of high-born ladies, and the rescue of leaguered damsels. Living wholly with his mother, his retiring disposition wore a shyness of manner and sometimes that of timidity. In the rough world of the woods and the rougher ways of the borderers whom he met at his new home, he was at first a little stunned and for a time confused. To the three or four pioneer women, whose ancestors had ever lived on the changing border, and their half-barbarian children whom he found there, he was an object of more curiosity and interest than were Omics Indians with their squaws and papposes to him, a band of whom inhabited a village of wigwams at the bend of the river, a mile below the homestead.

On his return with new laborers and improved implements, the proprietor resumed the scarcely suspended war of extermination upon the forests and the cultivation of the cleared lands, while Roy was left wholly to his own guidance and resources. His father had a cultivated fondness for books, and carried with him a considerable library on his

return to his domain in the woods. Between this and the interminable forest Roy divided his time; an apt student in wood craft, he in time became an adept.

An able and willing professor was awaiting his arrival. Among the retainers of Castle Gregory the most conspicuous and useful was Jim Brady, a cousin of the famous Samuel Brady, whom he resembled. A comrade also he had been of the Poes, all great Indian hunters and fighters of an earlier day. Legends of their exploits still linger in all that region, and their names have secure places in the pages of pioneer history. Brady was the hunter of the Castle, had a taste in forest finery, and went tricked out in gay deerskin hunting shirt, beaded leggins and moccasins, and wampum belt. Roy took to him at once. Here was a famous borderer, one of the men of whom he had read, with the romance of battle exploit about him; a rescuer of captured maidens from the Indians, with the flavor of wild wood adventure around his head. Roy went with him on his shorter excursions, heard his stories, learned how to find his way through the woods, and to care for himself in their depths. He came to know much of the nature and the ways of the wild things that lived and prowled there, of their haunts and habits. He had an innate dread of mere bloodshed, which he was slow to overcome, and it was a long time before he brought himself to master the practical part of a hunter's craft, that which involves the art of the butcher. At first he carried what Brady called a bear spear, an effective lance-headed weapon, with a tough hickory shaft eight or nine feet long, which once belonged to Adam Poe, and had in his hands seen service in Indian battles. It pleased Roy's fancy as a knightly weapon, and for a long time was his constant companion. It served a good purpose during his second year in

the woods. One day, while all the men and women were absent from Omic's camp, a large bear invaded it, and was set upon by the dogs. A half-grown son of the chief wounded him with an old musket, which rendered him furious. Roy was fishing near by in the river, and heard the uproar of dogs, gun, and children, and the war-cry of the young chief. He seized his lance, leaped ashore, and ran to the scene, just in time. A sharp lunge in the bear's side drew him from the young Indian. When the brute turned on him, a fortunately directed thrust reached his heart and finished him. The Indian youth escaped with some dangerous hurts, two dogs were killed, and another crippled. Roy's exploit showed great courage and coolness, and gained for him a high reputation in all the Indian camps and villages of the Shawanees and Delawares, who called him Bearkiller. Omic made him a present of a famous whistle curiously wrought of a bear's tusk, and bound with silver, and which was said to have belonged to an officer of the old Virginia rangers used to call and signal his men, as a bugle is used among men on a skirmish line, and could be heard at a great distance. The feat may have advanced him with his father, of whom he kept shy for some days after the occurrence. Among the frontiersmen the adventure was appreciated, with the drawback that it saved the life of a young Indian. It may have quickened Roy's own latent love of wild wood adventure and daring. He was soon after seen carrying a fowling piece, which in a few months gave place to a rifle, with which in time he became a famous shot and a skillful hunter; ranging the forest, passing the nights in the woods, and often visiting the Indian camps and villages, where he was a favorite, and accompanying Brady on his most distant excursions. A lover of the woods and streams, not merely

an idle observer, he studied them, became a student, and with the aid of books, made himself familiar with natural history, as it then existed. With a poetic imagination and temperament, he was especially attracted by all the objects of sylvan beauty in the virginal world about him, and noted with the keenest zest the coming and going seasons, with all the exquisite variety of change, worked by the hands of unchanged nature, in the region where she alone had reigned from the beginning.

Five years stole lightly over the woods, which continued to recede from the Gregory mansion, when came the war of 1812, with the fright and horror of Indian hostilities along the northwestern frontier. The eldest son of Omic, in a drunken brawl at Carter's tavern, in Cleveland, had slain a white man and been hanged, and the chief had plotted vengeance since his death. His opportunity came now. All through the preceding autumn and winter there were numerous assemblages of Indians, and emissaries were coming and going from Canada, and runners passing from village to village in the Ohio woods. There were many indications of uneasiness and ill feeling among the natives, wherever they were met with. One day in June Brady and Roy, on their return from a hunt, saw a long file of them on the trail leading from their great camp on the Cuyahoga, near Burton, toward Sandusky, all on their ponies, equipped as if for a long march. The warriors were in war paint, sullen and scowling. Brady said they were leaving the country, and seemingly bent on mischief. The next day not an Indian was met with or seen in all the woods, on hillside, or by lake margin, or stream. All their camps were broken up, and villages deserted, the first sign to the scattered immigrants on the Reserve of disturbance, and they knew not how to read it.

Past midsummer day an express rider across the Ohio forest from Pittsburg brought word that war had been declared by Congress against Great Britain. General Hull invaded Canada with a proclamation, retreated and surrendered his army, and the whole Michigan peninsula, followed by a rumor that the Indian hordes, with their white allies, were in Ohio, marching eastward, murdering and burning as they went. There was a cry of alarm through the woods, and all the adult males hurried to the mouth of the Cuyahoga to defend the infant town of Cleveland, thirty miles from Castle Gregory. Then for the first time the place put on the aspect of a fortress. The families of the few settlers within the circuit of many miles took refuge within its walls, and the women and boys, with two or three crippled and invalidated men formed the garrison. Roy's father sternly forbade his going forward to Cleveland with himself, and the contingent of able bodied men, and the place was left in his command.

The day after his father's departure, he left his post, and with his rifle made his way to Cleveland, where he avoided his father. Colonel Hayes, who commanded the first organized regiment for the defense of the threatened country, was soon in the field and Roy found a place in his ranks. Hayes was pushed westward up the lake, to the Huron River. From there a detachment was stationed in a little stockade, made famous the next year by young Croghan's defense, when it was called Fort Stephenson. While here word came that the Indians were pillaging and burning the deserted farm houses near the lake, and a resolute officer was permitted to attempt their chastisement, with such of the men as should volunteer for the expedition. Roy and young Joshua R. Giddings were of this party. The Indians, led by Omic in person, were encountered, and a sharp affair

ensued, the first battle of the war, on Ohio soil, in which several of the soldiers were killed and more wounded. Omic was roughly handled, and left his knife, which had been a present to him, with his name engraved on the handle, sticking in the body of a dead and scalped soldier, to verify his presence and vengeance. No invasion of Ohio was attempted that season, and after much hardship and sickness, the regiment was sent home. Roy returned to Castle Gregory to be forgiven by his father for his escapade.

General Harrison, who had defeated the Prophet, brother of the famous Tecumthea, the year before, on the Tippecanoe, was placed in command of the northwestern army. The autumn and winter were spent in collecting material and soldiers. Among the men of the Northwest the new general found none more intelligent and determined than John Gregory, whom he placed on his staff. Roy was permitted to accompany his father in the early part of the campaign, which opened with the disaster of Winchester's defeat at Frenchtown, and the arrest of Harrison at the Maumee Rapids, where he built and was besieged in Fort Meigs. Roy was in the fort and took some part in the battles around it. When the British commander and Tecumthea were compelled to retreat, Roy, under the inflexible orders of his father, returned very reluctantly to Castle Gregory.

From the battle and final victory of the Thames, which followed soon after Perry's famous sea fight and capture of the British squadron on Lake Erie, the elder Gregory returned home, broken in health from exposure, with the title of major. Soon after there was added to his name that of judge of the county of Trumbull, which at one time included the whole of the Reserve.

The destruction of the enemy's fleet on the lake, the capture of his army, the death of Tecumthea, secured peace to the Northwestern frontier, when came two or three idle, thriftless years to the Gregory plantation. The hunters and laborers were in the army. Immigration had ceased, communication with the East had become precarious. The large farm was greatly neglected. The horses, cattle, and swine, were left much to themselves, and increased as they might, with few exactions, and little attention from the master. Roy hunted, read, studied, dreamed, and grew, as he could. The last was done exceedingly well. In the woods a bold adventurous hunter, a skillful rider, and perfect master of a boat. Among men, when he met them, a shy, silent youth, with women—God help him, since he left Massachusetts he had not seen half a score of European descent, and not one of refinement.

Brady, though he survived the war, did not return to Castle Gregory. By the terms of the treaty of peace, the Indians formerly living in the Ohio woods were to be permitted to go back to their pleasant camping grounds, unmolested. Of those who returned, one entire band was cut off at the rapids of the Upper Cuyahoga, by some of the resident hunters, who had been in the war. To another, on the Chagrin, Roy himself gave notice that they would be attacked, which enabled them to escape. This involved him in an almost mortal feud with the surviving Indian hunters of that region.

Brady built his hut near Fort Wayne, where Roy visited him, and they hunted on the higher waters of the Auglaize. They also spent a month or two afterward, about the head of the Sandusky Bay. While here, Roy received a present from the Indians, whom he had befriended on the Chagrin.

On the re-establishment of peace, there was a vigorous revival of thrift and industry

on the Gregory estate. The tide of New England immigration again flowed into the Western woods, greatly swollen above that of any former period. The lands of Judge Gregory were sought, and he was also an agent for the sale of the estates of other proprietors, which placed in his hands considerable sums of ready money. He cherished his love of books, and with the establishment of mails, was in receipt of publications made in the Eastern cities. In the meantime, Roy became a practical surveyor, and his services were occasionally put in requisition to run out, as it was called, the lands of new purchasers, otherwise he was at his own devices. He had dreamed, hunted, fished and mused. He secured a new percussion lock rifle, cultivated his dogs, spent more time with the horses, built boats for the river and a small lake, in the neighborhood, and made some widely extended hunting excursions. The tall, high-shouldered, lathy boy of thirteen in all these years had matured to the tall, straight, well-developed, powerful young man of twenty-three, frank-browed, large-eyed, sun-browned, and handsome, as lithe, supple, and strong as a panther. The boy had grown to manhood naturally and without the changes and modifications which ordinary association with men and women in the social world produce. He had the shy, silent, unassumed freshness and simplicity of a child; all the bright possibilities of life were but vague dreams; passion was rudimentary, poetic, and, taking everything—all his impressions first-hand, directly from sylvan nature about him. His unstained imagination dwelt on the purest ideals of excellence and loveliness, and he had himself unconsciously grown healthfully to his own conception of beautiful manhood. His dress remained barbaric. The hunting shirt of dressed deer skin and beaded moccasins were

usually parts of it. At his father's suggestion he patronized the first tailor at Cleveland, who fashioned a coat on a pattern, the result of a compromise between them. Top boots over close-fitting pantaloons, he affected for horseback, but for the woods the noiseless moccasin, in which his light, firm step was unheard, remained his choice. He did not learn the use of a razor, and Jupiter sent him a brown, silky beard, which at first imparted a fuzzy look to his dark, sun-browned face, set in abundant black hair, left to grow and curl as it would. Supple, having the unconscious grace of a child, shrinking among men, with whom he was reserved, it might be predicted that with refined women he would be embarrassed. Awkward, he could hardly ever become—clownish, never. Not in those sylvan shades can his life always be passed. He is not always to follow deer, drive elk, shoot bears, and destroy wolves; looking up from his leafy bivouac through the tree tops to the far off autumn night stars. He may not spend all his days pulling his boats over the full banked river, listening to the notes of song birds, or float and dream in the shadow of the wooded shores of the forest lake, turning his eyes from the surrounding trees to his face in the mirror below. He used to think that it was plain, in fact, ugly. As it was now more tolerable to him, he supposed in his own innocence it was because he was used to it. He had but a fragment of a looking-glass in his room, and less furniture than a soldiers' barrack. The simple fellow often studied the faces of beautiful women in engravings; and he supposed that in the great world beyond the woods there were many of these celestial beings, throbbing with actual life, but to him they would remain unrealized dreams. He felt that he was of the forest, grown and fitted to its shadows, dim glades and silence.

To see, to meet, to love one of these beautiful beings—be loved by her! He sighed and closed his mental vision. Love was not a pressing need of his healthful nature, and made its possibility felt only in vague yearnings, shadowy visions, and unconscious impulses. Fresh and virginal in heart, imagination, and form, passion would sleep till the princess came from the far country to awaken him and it. Would it spring into full life with a bound? Would it come forth an infant, with feeble pulse, to be nursed to vigorous life? Who can say?

CHAPTER II.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE POND WITH OTHER MATTERS OF INTEREST.

About a mile northeast of the Gregory House was the lake already mentioned, a bit of primitive loveliness in the bosom of wooded banks, well stocked with fish. Its outlet into the river, a small stream, in its descent furnished sites for the first mills in all that region, set up by Mr. Gregory before the war. A fourth of a mile northwest from the upper end was a small clearing made by a man named Day, who also built but never finished a neat log cabin. Here he intended to live, but the war came and frightened him away, and he never returned. The house, with an outbuilding, stood as he left them, and shoots of the original forest had begun to spring up with other growths in the cleared ground.

The pioneers, following the habit of New England speech, called all the smaller bodies of water ponds, and the lake here mentioned was merely 'the pond.' It was a favorite resort of Roy, who kept his boats in the outlet or drawn up on the mills dam below.

Here on the pond, of a lovely midafternoon, of a day in September, 1817, in a light flat-bottomed neatly turned little boat, man-

aged with an Indian paddle, sat Roy, moving leisurely northward along the Eastern shore, with a long rod projecting from his boat, trying for bass. His favorite dog, Luna, with a large strain of water spaniel, and human eyes, was with him in the skiff, and Leo, the powerful deer hound, was idly prospecting the woods, occasionally coming down for a lap of water, and to observe his master's whereabouts. Already the first foot-prints of autumn were on the maple tree tops. Pale gold was edging the leaves of the lowland hickories and tulip trees on the hill sides. The chestnut burs, the bark of the hickory nuts, with the leaves of the beech, were still a lively green. The youth seemed to care little for the success of his fishing. One or two small bass he disengaged with tender care from the hook, and returned to the pond, with the apparent disapproval of Luna, who on each occurrence of this humanity, made impatient movements as if she would plunge into the pond and recapture them. A flock of ducks got on the wing before them, and Luna turned her great intelligent eyes on her master in surprise, that he had not brought a gun. When a second squadron appeared, she permitted her feelings to get the better of her judgment and leaped into the water, swam a few yards, was forgiven, turned back, and was taken on board, where, shaking the water from her, she lay down quite subdued at the thought of her forgetfulness of herself. Not long after the capture of a fine bass restored her confidence in her master and herself; and after it was deposited in the Indian made basket, she resumed her wonted position of watchful observation of the young boatman. The little craft made its way slowly northward. It passed a cloud of lily pads, and the voyager gave his attention to his lines, and carrying his hooks clear of them. This was opposite an opening in the margin fringe

of water brush, through which two pairs of wondering, almost wonderful, eyes were upon him. His care for his tackle occupied him till the brush hid him, nor did he pay any attention to the demonstrations of Luna at the time. Perhaps he should have felt the gaze he drew. I fancy he did not. It was but an instant the dark browed young skipper of the boat was exposed to the curious eye. He had now doubled a point and commanded a view of the upper part of the lake, when as he was about to drop his hook again into the water, an eager whine from Luna drew his attention forward. What was his surprise, when he saw standing on the trunk of a fallen tree, which extended into the deep water of the lake, a little to his right, and fifty or sixty yards distant a young man, just passing boyhood, also fishing. The surprise was mutual, neither had an intimation of the other's presence till their sight of each other, as neither had ever heard of the others existence. The fisherman of the log had never seen a resemblance of him of the boat, while his appearance reminded Roy of his own earlier years. Curiosity, the pleasant sense of companionship, a common youth, notwithstanding the six or seven years between their ages, drew them to each other. With two or three vigorous strokes, Roy sent his boat alongside the tree trunk. He nodded to the youth, and said in a pleasant voice: "I hope you are having good luck."

"Well, fisherman's luck, though not a fisherman," was the good natured answer. "I've caught two or three small ones."

"It is not a good day nor a good time of day," Roy rejoined, pushing to the beach while the stranger walked back along the log. Roy stepped from his boat, which he drew up on the sands.

In a little weir inclosed by small stones, in shallow water, were the fish taken by the stranger.

"What are they?" he asked.

"The one with the dark rings and red fins is a yellow perch, and a good fish. The golden is a strawberry bass, which many prefer. The other is a roach, very good in this water, but inferior to the others," (and examining the youth's tackle—"your hook is large for these, and angleworms or grasshoppers make a good bait. I should be glad to furnish you some hooks if I may," he added.

"Thank you. I shall be glad of them."

"You were from 'down country,' I see," said Roy.

"Yes, we came from Boston. My father was a merchant there," as if that was all that need be said, as it was.

"Indeed!" To Roy, Boston was the equal of London, and he had always ranked Boston merchants with the merchants of Venice. "So you are from Boston!" he said. "I was born in Massachusetts. So we are almost relatives. I did not know there was anybody within ten miles of here," he added.

"Well, we got here day before yesterday. We are only just up here," pointing toward the deserted clearing.

"O! the old Day place! and you are there? Why, we are neighbors. I am very glad, and glad I met with you," very warmly.

"Well, I am glad you are glad," was the hearty response.

"We shall get on well together, I know," said the elder, with a beautiful confidence.

"I know we shall, too," answered the younger.

"You have no boat, of course," said Roy, wishing to say something.

"No, we could not very well bring one, any way."

"Of course not. I have two on this pond, and you may have either of them. The other is larger and better than this."

"Thank you. Is the pond large?"

"No, you can see most of it. It turns below and there is an outlet into the river."

"The river? What river?"

"The Cuyahoga."

"What a funny name. Is it a large river?"

"Not so large as the Connecticut. The Indians named it."

"Are there any Indians here?"

"No, none within sixty miles of here. Do you hunt?"

"No, I don't know how to shoot, or do anything. I'm useless here in the woods."

"You'd learn in no time. I have a plenty of guns and things, and nothing else to do. We will hunt every day till you know all about it. I can hunt some," dropping his eyes.

"O—I'd like that the best of anything in the world—this world of woods," said the stranger, wondering who this dark, Indian-like dressed young man could be, who had boats and guns and nothing to do but hunt. Luna had left the boat scouting up in the woods, and at this point she took several steps forward and gave one of her meaning whines, which drew her masters' attention. He was standing with his back to the forest, and turned to meet a real living wonder—two of them. There within five yards, just by the upper margin of the water brush which concealed their approach, stood two young women—ladies everywhere, either of whom would arrest attention in a gathering of beautiful women. Their like had faded from Roy's memory, and had certainly never stood on the margin of this forest lake, both fair and fresh, refined and beautiful, like the loveliest pictures of maidens he had ever seen; while the younger and slighter surpassed as it seemed to him his inmost imaginings. The elder may have been twenty-five, a shade riper than ordinary mature maidenhood. Tall, full, with fine eyes, and a tone of some-

thing in her face of just not melancholy or pensiveness, may have been thoughtfulness.

The younger certainly not quite as tall, more slender, with the indescribable way which we call winsome, having wide, gray, laughing, mocking—always laughing eyes; a face of dazzling fairness, set in a profusion of fair wind blown hair that never lost its waviness.

Roy was entranced. A vision of real celestials just let down through the opening tree tops, would scarcely have impressed him more. It was a realized dream of romance; a picture from a page of medieval chivalry. With the instinct of gentle courtesy in the presence of high born damsels, he lifted his visorless cap of marten skin, a mere fillet to confine his own abundant hair. The act, with a receding movement of the lithe form, and an inclination of the head, was really charming, and gracefully acknowledged by both ladies. It was their eyes that looked so wonderingly down at him, in the passing boat, a few minutes before. Hearing the voices of the young men, they walked in their direction, till arrested by the sight of them, at the water's margin, when they stood silently, till Luna drew her master's attention to them. Wider grew the young man's eyes, as they passed from one to the other of the ladies; and then turned questioningly to the face of his new Boston friend.

"They are my sisters," he said with a brother's indifference.

"O, your sisters!" immensely relieved and bowing now with more assurance.

"Yes, that is Ruth," pointing to the eldest. "The other is Cora," in a true young brother's grudging manner, who feels that no possible interest can be felt by any other chap in sisters of his.

At each name the young ladies received a bow which would not have discredited a drawing room. At the last the receding form of the

young boatman was arrested by the thicket of brush into which he seemed to be retreating, when, finding his rear protected, he took a firmer position.

"Our father's name is Hillman," said Ruth, graciously, "and our brother here is called George. Of course we are strangers in these endless woods," she added, with a sigh.

"O, I hope you will like them and stay," said Roy very warmly in reply. "My father lives not far off—just down through the woods on the river," with a gesture in the direction. "His name is Gregory," he added, dropping his eyes.

"Judge Gregory? We have heard of him," said the younger sister, vivaciously.

"He goes to the courts and some call him Judge," answered the son, bashfully. Then came a look from both girls which he understood but did not know just how to answer. He blushed under his curling brown beard, sun-tanned as his face was.

"O, my mother named me Fitzroy," he said at length, abruptly, with the bashfulness and something of the attractive way of a young child. "My father calls me Roy," he added.

"O, he does," answered Ruth. "Your mother—" finishing the sentence with a look.

"She died a great while ago in Massachusetts," with a tone of sadness, dropping his eyes.

"Forgive me. You have brothers and sisters?"

"Only my father. Never had a sister or brother." Never before so realizing his lonely condition, mentally contrasting it with George's made paradise by these sisters. Something of this, his manner of saying these words, brought to the apprehension of the young ladies. As he spoke them he turned and broke off a twig, giving to their eyes his

striking person from the still uncovered head to moccasined feet. The upper part was covered with a frayed but still handsome deer-skin hunting shirt, fastened low by a silver brooch and leaving the well turned throat and the whole of the neck to its union with the chest exposed. Around the waist was tied the woven beaded wampum. The lower limbs had all the advantage of their fine mold in close fitting pantaloons, while the beaded moccasins were tied under them. A finer form for youthful grace, strength, and activity was never so unconsciously given to appreciative feminine eyes. With the frank face now bent downward and wearing the passing expression of sadness, nothing was wanting to enlist sympathy with admiration. Figure and costume seemed in perfect harmony with the sylvan surroundings of the scene.

"We have heard of your father," said the elder sister, whose appreciative eyes did justice to the young forester, "and are glad we are in your vicinity. Our other neighbors are probably more remote," smiling as she spoke.

"Yes; but then there are three families with us, and a number of workers and—hangers-on—some might say," smiling in turn. "We will do all we can to make a whole neighborhood for you," ingenuously. "I do hope you won't be so very lonely and homesick. But I've lived in the woods so long that I've forgotten the old world from which you came, and don't remember what you've lost."

"You are very kind indeed. But are you never lonesome, Mr. Gregory?" said the elder sister.

He blushed. The dignity of being so addressed by this woman disconcerted him; and then with a smile—"I never thought of it before." He threw away the bit of twig broken off, and turned his eyes to George. "I most fear I may be unless"—a little con-

fused. "I always had dogs, boats, horses, guns, the woods, and books. I never thought I was lonesome, and so I suppose I was not;" laughing very pleasantly, showing very fine white teeth.

"Had you no young men—young persons here with you?" asked Ruth.

"None but young children. O, I have managed till now, and your brother says he would like to have me hunt and fish with him;" as if that was a condescension on the part of the Bostonian.

"O, I am sure he will be glad to have you take him, and we shall all take it as kindness if you will," said Cora vivaciously.

Roy was sure that, since his mother's, he had never heard a voice so sweet and musical.

"I most know we shall be great friends," he answered warmly, turning his eyes to George.

"Of course," he answered, as if no words were needed. "And Ruth, he has two boats on this very pond, and offers me one of them—which ever I like," eagerly.

"He is very kind; but George, beggars must not be choosers."

"O, I made him the offer," replied Roy, quickly, "and I have more things than I can use. It is a new thing for me to help some one, Miss Hillman. After all, coming from Boston, you will be surprised how few things you really need here, and how many uses you can put one thing to," he added.

"Have you learned that?" asked Cora, a little archly.

"So well that I have forgotten the uses of some things; that is the reason I have more than I use," was his answer.

"I am glad to know there is such a philosophy," said Ruth, smiling.

"Yes, and Mr. Gregory will find us willing though dull pupils, I fear," added Cora.

Mr. Gregory! from Cora. He could make no answer. The sisters went down to the boat.

"What a funny little thing it is!" cried Cora.

"Yes; but you see it is flat bottomed, which makes it steady. It will carry you three, with me to row it," answered the skipper.

"Will it?" asked the girl, eagerly.

"Please step in—there is not the least danger," earnestly. He stepped on board, and placed a seat near the bow.

Without hesitation Cora entered the boat and sat down.

"I will see the voyage from the land," said the smiling Ruth. George pushed the little craft from shore, but did not step on board; it looked so slight. Luna came leaping into the water after the boat, swimming with all her power, giving out little entreating barks to be taken on board.

"O, wait for her, the lovely, faithful thing," cried Cora eagerly.

"She can swim all day," said Roy, turning the craft in obedience to the wish. "I fear she may wet you;" and then to Luna, "Old girl! Did you think we were going to leave you? She would not trust herself to go far with us," meaning Cora, and then he drew the eager Luna in, and made her crouch near himself.

The light shallop was sent skimming over the smooth surface of the water, and making a little circle of two or three hundred yards, he landed the young lady at the point of embarkation, who thanked him graciously. "I have a really very good boat down at the mill-dam," he said. "It will carry eight or ten persons. I hope before long, Miss Hillman," to Ruth, "you and your sister will give me a chance to show you the whole pond in that. It has a pair of oars, and I am sure Mr. George would be glad to go."

"Of course I should," answered the young man cordially.

"I am sure we shall be greatly obliged," said Cora, in which Ruth concurred.

A faint peculiar sound from a great distance, from the remote depths of the forest, reached the ears of Cora. "What is that," she cried to George.

"I don't hear anything," he answered listening.

They turned to Roy, who looked a little vexed, "Luna here caught it before she left the boat," he said; "see how she quivers with eagerness," he added.

Stronger came the regular notes.

"O, now I hear it" cried George.

"So do I," said Ruth, as the three drew toward the young hunter for a solution.

"It is only my old Leo running a deer," he said in explanation. "He knows perfectly well that I don't permit it, don't he Luna girl? And you want to go too," as she leaped into the air with a joyous spring, and a bark. "No, no," with sharp emphasis to her. She flattened herself down on the ground where she had stood, and lay with tremulous submission.

They now gave their united attention to the swelling cry.

"He is running by sight, now," said Roy; "you may know by the sharp, gasping bark, which comes at every leap, like a heart beat."

"Can he catch a well deer?" asked the excited George.

"He would run one down in time. They are coming this way. This is a runaway—a place where deer often pass. This one is making for the bend in the river below. If you wish to see the chase, we will go into the high ground. Perhaps he will take the water," leading the way to an eligible position. When they gained it, the bay of the dog—

sharp, short at regular intervals—was distinctly heard.

"Keep perfectly still," said Roy, who had kept Luna by him, and was bestowing soothing caresses upon her.

On, louder and louder, came the bay of the straining, eager Leo. An instant later, and a splendid buck, with nose up and antlers laid back, came gallantly bounding through the open glades, in a direction to pass the upper end of the pond, between it and the intent, silent group. When near, Roy raised a loud, clear, peculiar note, ending with a trill. Suddenly, as if stricken, the noble deer stopped within forty yards, his great eyes gleaming with surprise and terror. Roy threw up his hands with a quick movement, when he turned like a flash, as if to flee down the east side of the pond, making an acute angle with his line of approach. Leo ran near the ground—a white line rapidly projected over the greenery of its surface a hundred yards behind. He saw the buck turn and cut him off, when, seeing no other opening, the gallant fellow took to the water, one bound cleared the thicket of brush, and the next landed him in deep water.

"No, Luna, no!" cried the young hunter, which sent the half maddened dog again to the ground prostrate. At the water's edge Leo was met with a recall so imperious and from a point so near that he had space for no choice. He dashed into the water, in which he lay down, hot and panting, lapping it, while the escaping deer, with but his nose and horns above the surface, swam boldly for the opposite shore.

"Could you catch him with the boat?" eagerly demanded George of Roy.

"Easily."

"Let us go!" cried the boy, impetuously.

"Would you murder the innocent thing under their eyes?" asked Roy, with a glance at the excited girls.

"No! No! Oh, no! Let him escape—the splendid beauty!" cried Cora, imploringly. Then turning her eyes upon the fugitive, "See! See! How he struggles—the grand old hero. Oh what a sight you have given us!"

"Certainly he shall go," said the unmoved young hunter, whose eyes had given more attention to Cora than to the deer, after he had entered the lake. "Certainly he shall go," he repeated to the pleading girl, looking as if he would be glad of an excuse to kneel at her feet.

Rapidly the fugitive deer approached the western shore of the lake. His feet touched the sandy bottom, and he leaped, another bound and he was upon the pebbly beach, where he went with long, springy bounds up the bank and disappeared in the forest.

"They leap too high for the greatest speed, but the spectacle is better for it," remarked Roy, unmoved.

"What a splendid creature!" said Ruth, the first words since the appearance of the deer from her.

"And what wonderful bounds he took; I am so glad he got away, he was too beautiful to kill," said the gratified Cora.

"Yes, that is all very fine, Cora, but what is one to do for meat in these woods?" demanded the practical and dissatisfied George.

"That is matter for consideration," said Ruth, smiling.

"May I carry you some venison?" asked Roy, turning to Ruth.

"I am sure we shall be very thankful," was her answer.

"Sometime to-morrow morning, then," he said carelessly.

"Could you have hit him when he stopped with a gun?" asked George of the young man—meaning the buck.

"You could have killed him with a shot-gun yourself then," was the reply. "In water he was helpless, poor fellow."

"And you shoot them?" asked Cora, with reproach in her voice.

"I could not in your presence," turning away, unconscious of his compliment to her.

"She will relish the venison though," added George, sarcastically.

"We shall none of us decline it:" said the reassuring Ruth, with a glance at her sister.

"I never destroy any creature, unless I think it is needed," said Roy, very modestly.

"O, I am sure you do not," Cora replied quickly.

During this conversation, they had walked back to the sands, where the skiff rested with its bow drawn up, and the abashed Leo made his way hesitatingly toward the group; with no eyes for any but his master. The strangers greatly admired him, tall and powerful, milk white, with two or three dark brown spots on his coat, and dark tips to his moderately sized ears. He paused some yards away, regarding his master with deprecating glances,

"Leo!" Roy cried sharply to him, at which he crouched to the ground where he stood.

"Don't, don't punish him;" cried Cora, entreatingly. "He brought us a splendid sight; and it was his nature I suppose," she added.

"Do you hear her, Leo?" called the pleased young man to him, as the noble animal, assured by the change of his tone and manner, now leaped toward him. "He knew that a word would be all his punishment," he said to Cora, to whom he led the dog.

"O what a splendid creature he is," she said, patting his head, now held almost to her shoulder. The jealous Luna now came forward also to claim her attention, and received it.

"I fear he may wet you. He is just out of the water," Roy said, greatly pleased at her praise of him, and wanting to say something.

Then he raised from under the seat at the stern of the boat, the Indian basket, and took out one or two of the beautiful black backed golden sided bass, which he dipped into the water, and exhibited them to the group by his side. He replaced them and handed the basket to George. "I interrupted your fishing, and if you will accept them you shall have them," he said, in a pleasant way.

"Not all of them, Mr. Gregory, I protest," said Ruth, earnestly.

"Of course, he shall. There are but four or five. On my way down I can catch a plenty more of them. Take them with the basket as they are. I will get that to-morrow. I am certain I was to take you a venison to-morrow, Miss Hillman," he said askingly, as if wanting assurance on that point.

"We shall be very glad to see you. My father will be glad to make your acquaintance. The venison will be acceptable." He glanced from her to Cora, on whose lips played a slight smile. He wondered what it meant.

It was near sundown. The young man accompanied the party to the upper ground, and pointed out the direction of their wilderness home, saying in a simple, direct way, as he took leave: "The woods seem so much richer now. I wonder if I shall awake in the morning to find it a dream."

They stood where he left them, to see his embarkation. Luna leaped into the boat, and he compelled Leo to follow her. When he was ready, he turned, and seeing his new acquaintances with their faces to him, he lifted his cap to them, entered the little shallop, and pulled his solitary way over the darkening surface of the lake. Not till he had passed a jutting point of land, which hid him from view, did they withdraw their eyes from the now lonely sheet of water.

CHAPTER III.

ROY TALKS OF SHAVING AND QUOTES THE FAIRY QUEEN TO CORA.

Cora stood with her sister and brother gravely noticing all that was done in this departure until the final disappearance below the hiding obstruction, and then as they turned to walk away she broke out with a laugh: "O! was there ever anything so strange and funny?"

"So funny as what?" demanded George, sharply.

"As everything. This Fitzroy; and all about him."

"O! you always laugh at everybody."

"His fuzzy face. His—why everything;" and she laughed again.

"You may laugh at his beard as much as you please, Cora. He will never cut it for you I hope," said Ruth, smiling as she spoke.

"His hunting—something and belt-beaded; his—"

"O you had better finish him at once," said Ruth.

"His wampum and flowered moccasins. O Ruth, it's a pity you were not younger, or—" and she finished with a look.

"Cora is always so blasted mean," put in the disgusted George; "she always abused everyone who came near her."

"Be patient, George," said the elder sister; "you will have your pay for this;" to Cora. "The poor solitary boy living here in the woods, so unknowing, as tender and fresh as Adam the day of his creation. He is just splendid; and you will coquet with him here in these solemn woods," looking up through the tree tops.

"Coquet with Adam! Adam is rather good, Ruth. I shall be more apt to try the judge," she answered gaily.

"I am very glad we met him," said Ruth seriously.

"So am I," cried George, angrily, who was walking at a distance from the teasing Cora.

"And so am I," added Cora, mockingly.

"Well I don't care; he'll bring up his boats and guns and fish hooks, and we shall hunt and fish, anyway."

"Much good you will have of him," answered Cora, perversely.

"Cora," cried George, turning angrily upon her; "This is what I call all-fired mean."

"There, there, George," interposed Ruth. "Don't say any more. You just keep your eyes open for a while, and see what comes of it."

"She sha'n't have any of these bass. She sha'n't have any of the venison he brings to-morrow, anyway," he put in.

"Well, while you are keeping your eyes open, George, have a good lookout for that same venison," rejoined the girl with a laugh.

"O, George, I like to tease you; you are so pettish," she added, with a very pleasant way.

A look from Ruth kept the chafed boy silent, and he walked rapidly and moodily on, while the girls turned their conversation to the new surroundings in which they found themselves.

Peace, which was hailed with joy by two nations and their millions, brought ruin to Mr. Hillman, as to many beside. From luxury and affluence to penury the descent was made and, still a resolute and enterprising man, he resolved to transfer himself and motherless daughters to the remote woods of Ohio. Many reasons made this desirable. Heart-sick, worn and exhausted, the little band reached the opening in the woods. Had rested during the night and the fore part of the next day, when, in the after part, George persuaded his sisters to go on an exploration of the surrounding forest. They followed the track of a long disused trail, until the sparkle of the lake through the trees at-

tracted them, when George returned for his fish rod and they visited it with the result known to the reader. The new shelter of the Bostonians was one of the better constructed cabins of hewed logs and a framed roof with a stone chimney, but had never received its intended door or window. The floor had been roughly laid, and the lower part divided into two small rooms. It stood on a pleasant swell of ground fronting south, with the frame for a porch along that side. Near it stood a smaller hovel-like building, which had been occupied by the builders of the house, and the clearers of the five or six acres of land which surrounded it. This now furnished the stable for the oxen and horses of the new immigrants. The covered stout wagon, on which was transported the goods, stood near the doorway of the house, while that occupied for the women and occasionally a weary male, stood under an extemporized shed.

The merchant had bargained with the Eastern proprietor of the property, which neither had seen. As a part of his family, he was attended by two sturdy young men of the name of Winter and the young and recently married wife of the elder. The place had not yet taken on the aspects of a habitation in the eyes of the homesick daughters, of refined Boston, as they emerged from the woods on their return. George elected himself historian of the events of the excursion, which he recounted in an excited voice, and rendered the narrative in glowing and picturesque language, accompanied with a running comment and many notes from the vivacious Cora, while the smiling Ruth remained silent. To judge by the words of the speakers, they had not received the same impressions of the hero of Castle Gregory. The bass, however, inclined the balance in favor of George's version, and the assurances of venison the next morning, notwithstanding

Cora's doubts, were on the whole encouraging. Mr. Hillman had heard of Mr. Gregory in the East, and though the account was not from a friend of that gentleman, he was glad to know he was near him, and he determined to call on him at an early day. It is curious how almost entirely and suddenly the conventionalisms of artificial life in cities, are lost in a remote wilderness, and men and women find themselves unconsciously remitted to follow the rational impulses of intelligent human beings, in their relations and intercourse. This the Hillmans were destined to experience in various ways in the associations initiated by the meeting at the pond. They instinctively felt that the incident was in some way to influence their fortunes in the woods, though that was the subject of mental cogitation, if thought of at all.

The household was astir early the next morning. There was everything to do, at least for the males. Breakfast was made mainly of the bass, unanimously declared superb. "I am sure nothing can be found more delicious in the woods," said Cora, "unless it may be venison steaks," with a significant glance at her brother. "Letta Winter had her gridiron ready."

"Cora expected to get up and find that buck on hand, roasted whole," responded the disgusted youth.

"And as she did not, she roasts you," added Ruth.

"Well, I am a little disappointed," said the teasing girl to George, with mock seriousness.

George soon after was excused, and arose to go out.

"Going to look for your venison?" asked the persistent girl, which he affected not to hear.

In a minute he returned, his face aglow. He whispered a word to Ruth, gave Cora a

look, and went out followed by the elder sister. Near the hovel she saw Roy, who came forward and greeted her very pleasantly. As they approached him he said hesitating: "Miss Hillman, it won't be pleasant for you to see it."

"What won't be pleasant, what have you done?"

"Well, if I had brought you a live deer, it must have been killed by somebody."

"Yes, so you killed it before you started with it?"

"It was to be venison, you will please remember," smiling.

"Yes, I remember," looking around for it.

"It is only just back of the stable here," he said.

"O! well, I am brave enough to look on a dead deer."

A few steps and she was conducted to a yearling buck, round and sleek, extended as if in sleep, on the dewy grass and herbage.

"O, what a beauty! It was cruel to shoot him, Mr. Gregory."

The young man looked grave.

"I knew you would say so."

"Forgive me, I did not mean to reproach you by what I said," she added, "I congratulate you on your skill. George, call Cora, your father, and the rest."

In a few minutes the whole household stood in a circle around the beautiful creature, admiring it, wondering and asking questions, eager and excited.

Ruth introduced the young hunter to her father, and named the Winters to him.

He explained in answer to them, that the game was a "spike-horned buck," past one year old, as his short unbranched antlers indicated. The shot took effect, breaking the spine near the head, killing him instantly.

There lay the short, heavy, plain rifle, with the new percussion lock, neat and handsome; a silver mounted powder horn and fur cov-

ered bullet pouch. The light tomahawk—an Indian present—and buck horn hafted knife. These were objects of great curiosity to the young men, who made minute examinations of them, asking all manner of questions, with the copiousness of native New Englanders, all of which Roy answered quite to their satisfaction.

When the girls returned to the house, Roy suspended the deer from the limb of a small beech, and in a trice the venison was in a condition for delivery to the cook, the young man smiling and answering the questions of the wondering spectators during the few minutes in which he wrought the transformation.

"Mr. Hillman," he then said, "please accept this, in fulfillment of my promise of yesterday to the ladies."

"Do you mean the whole of it, Mr. Gregory?"

"O, it is not much—not forty pounds; and George had better hang the skin out of the reach of the thieving foxes and cats."

"Indeed, young man——" hesitating.

"Mr. Hillman, let me be your huntsman till George masters the art. I've nothing in the world to do. It will be a favor to me. We can supply you with a deer or turkey on an hour's notice," he said carelessly.

With some words of protestation and thanks, so for the time it was settled.

Roy was invited into the house, which was bare and rude, even to his border eyes; and he suggested the pioneer methods of supplying the deficiencies, and explained and enumerated the resources of the forest, and expedients by which they could be made available. To Ruth and the young wife he made known the process of jerking venison, of cooking the different portions of a deer, and the whole with the ingenuousness of a child.

Ruth treated him with the consideration due to a distinguished caller; while Cora em-

ployed the light weapons of gay banter, half irony and all persiflage, as she would in an encounter with a favored but bashful, unknown, two-thirds grown man, who saw only the most obvious things, and took everything seriously.

He finally requested Ruth to drop the "Mister Gregory" and permit him to remain simply Roy.

Cora thought, as a general rule, simple things had better retain their character, but Ruth was often attempting the impossible. The young man gravely concurred in her view, while the others exchanged glances. After all, he may, as Ruth thought, have appreciated her sister's lively style of conversation, as he later took occasion to say in illustrating his own want of observation, that he had been told there was an actual difference between a hawk and a handsaw, while to him they looked exactly alike. Nothing could exceed the gravity with which the remark was made, and Cora was herself mystified by his manner, and looked a little grave as she caught the half smile hovering over Ruth's lips.

As he took leave he mentioned the purpose of his father to call in the afternoon. He took George to show him the Cleveland trail, which passed some three hundred yards west of the cabin, and led directly past his father's house, to a ford of the river. With his hatchet he "blazed" (hewed the bark from) the opposite sides of trees, standing in the line of the route, so that any one could follow it. These terminated at the trail. As he went, he explained various points of daily use in wood craft, to his deeply interested auditor.

Toward the evening of that day Judge Gregory, accompanied by his son, rode across the woods to make the proposed call. Through the West he was better known as Major Gregory. He was mounted on a powerful dark roan. A man above the ordinary height and size, well made, with a

strong face of New England type, now disappearing—with a large head, covered with firm iron gray hair, which would never lose the iron. Courtly when he chose, he easily made a favorable impression, as he certainly did on all of the Hillman household that day. Nothing could be kinder than his manner and purpose, while for one of his age and worldly experience, his words were warm and sincere. He knew better than the newcomers their needs. The ruined merchant had not yet recovered heart. A serene face covered gloomy foreboding, as the unsuspected needs of his new position revealed themselves to him, conscious as he was of his inability to meet them. Curiously, though several years the younger, Cora, much better than her sister, had penetrated the secrets of their difficulties, and understood the sources of his perplexities. To her, the coming of this distinguished stranger was a great deal. He came to them in the depths of the forest, with offers so delicately worded that their acceptance in any part, left them without the humiliation of dependence.

On his part, he was favorably impressed by Mr. Hillman, and much struck by the daughters. Ruth, as he saw, was a superior woman, quite matured, with an indiscribable something, suggestive of an experience, a possible history, the memory of which might not be all pleasant.

In Cora he saw much beauty still in its first bloom, with a freshness and charm of manner that won him at once. He had no purpose to hide the impression she made. So frank was his admiration, and so pleasing to the gratified girl that even Roy, in the glow of her gratitude, appeared in a light entitling him to some consideration, boy as he was.

The youth came mounted on a beautiful young bay mare, and became her admirably. He wore a garment in cut anticipating the close sack coats of the young men of to-day; yet more open at the collar, and lightly

edged with fur. The wide shirt collar was fastened with a small gold brooch. The lower limbs were in the close-fitting pantaloons of the Brummel age; outside of which were worn neat-fitting top boots drawn to the middle of the calf, ornamented each with a dainty silken tassel, in front, altogether a very handsome youthful figure anywhere. His manner to his father was new to the Bostonians, and very charming. In the house he remained standing at one side and a little back of the Judge's chair, not speaking save in answer, his face animated, and his attitude easy and graceful.

"A fine old baron of the woods, and his high born son," was a fitting summing up of the discussion of the two, by Ruth, after their leave taking.

When they left the house, Roy led his father's horse to him and held his stirrup, as he slowly got into the saddle, when, vaulting into his own, he was instantly at the Judge's side, when, with a wave of his cap to the family group in the near distance, they rode slowly into the forest.

Cora was in, or affected to be in, a little flutter, over the elder of the departing horsemen.

"O, he is just lovely," with a little gush of manner.

"And Fitzroy?" queried her father, with arched brows.

"Well, he is growing. It is well enough to see what he may be like—some time," with her eyes in the distance as if measuring the immense space the youth must traverse.

"He may distinguish between a hawk and a handsaw," said Ruth—"sometime," she added, after a pause.

"That, the more I think of it, I am inclined to call sharp," replied the now serious girl. "A little banter won't hurt him, Ruth."

"Poor fellow," said the father, turning away. Yet why poor fellow he did not explain. He may have applied it to a mental vision. It may have been his reflection upon the lack and loneliness of the young man's life. Perhaps the result of forecasting the future.

The father and son rode their horses at a walk, and neither spoke till the last glimmer of the clearing was cut off by the intervening trees. Finally the elder man asked abruptly, "What do you think of her, Roy?"

"Who, father, Cora?"

"Yes."

"I think," passing his left hand over his curling beard lightly, "of learning to shave."

The old man looked at him for half a minute intently, with the glimmer of a new idea. That crisp speech meant something.

"Don't you do it, Roy," and then after some yards of silent progress, "don't you do it," he repeated with emphasis.

"Do you want to know what she thinks of me?" asked the youth, with his eyes in the tops of the trees.

"What does she?"

"That I am a baby—a soft, downy, pulpy baby," with his glance falling to his father's face, where it lingered an instant, when he added, "Pin-feathery."

The Judge pondered the problem a moment, and replied: "She is mistaken, Roy. The child is mistaken. By George, you are almost a man!" looking him over, with the light of his new idea deepening on his face.

"Am I?" looking off into the woods again.

"The Judge says 'yes,' replied the Judge. Women have quick eyes, and she will soon be a woman," he added, reflectively.

"She is a woman now," affirmed the young man, with his eyes still in the woods.

They rode in silence, turned into the trail, passed the creek, the boundary of the cattle range, and saw the sharp shafts of the

light flashing and gleaming from their own clearing through the trees.

As they were leaving the woods—"Roy you will be there a good deal," said the Judge. "We will have them with us, when we can get them. Don't be in a hurry to say anything in particular to her, Roy—you understand."

"O, I shall be a man sometime," was the young man's response to this cautionary speech of the senior; leaving him to construe its meaning.

Silence is a habit of the forest, she in a way imposes it on all her children. Not much speech was the custom of these two. The elder was to become observant and will notice increasing silence and abstraction on the part of the younger, and think about it in silence. On the next day George had his first lesson with a gun. Roy gave him a fowling piece and could imitate a turkey's call so accurately, that he had little trouble in luring those birds within the required distance. On the second trial, the pupil was successful and secured a fine young tom. He would have continued the war, but Roy said a true hunter limited his work to present needs. He, however, indulged George in shooting four or five squirrels, and showed him how to dress them. He also brought for his use his own first rifle, a serviceable weapon, showily mounted with silver, and taught him how to care for it and the use of the accompanying implements. Some rifle practice at a target was had for George's benefit also. The young man had no great aptitude for hunting, but his zeal and spirit were boundless, and his "Professor," as Cora playfully called his instructor, formed fair hopes of his success. He held out to his pupil the prospects of a deer hunt in a few days. On that day he did not enter the Hillman home. The next day was Saturday. The Judge invited the whole Hillman colony

to spend Sunday at Castle Gregory. Sunday had as yet hardly become a Sabbath in the woods, though observed by the Gregorys in a vague way. On this Saturday Roy went to arrange for the safe transit of the immigrants across the woods. The Hillmans had two horses that could be ridden, as also a side and an ordinary saddle.

On Sunday morning Roy took over the horses ridden by the Judge and himself, the mare for the first time wearing a lady's saddle, on which Roy rode woman fashion, to accustom her to it. The saddle had been his mother's, covered with blue cloth and trimmed with brocade, and over it was laid her blue cloth riding habit. Both had been preserved with such care that they appeared fresh and almost new, on this bright morning. His father sent them for Cora's use with a special message. Roy was nervously anxious to see her on the docile, blooded mare, and in that habit. He delivered the message to Ruth, who managed it for him. Indeed, Cora was the better horsewoman, and Ruth preferred the sober nag, whose spirit had been quelled by the recent long journey.

Cora was surprised and charmed by the arrival of the habit, and blushed and hesitated, she knew not why, at the idea of arraying herself in it. It fitted as if cunningly fashioned for her, and when she appeared with the long heavy skirt over one arm, tall, supple-like, and exquisitely molded, she realized to Roy the form of his pale, beautiful mother. The bay received her kindly. She was the first woman Roy had for years seen in the saddle. He remembered his services to his mother, though he blushed when he placed a dainty foot in its stirrup.

When fully placed in her seat with the draperies adjusted, the young man could not forbear one look up at her, unconscious of what it expressed; and mortal maiden

could not repress signs of the pleasure that timid glance gave her. There was adoration mingled with admiration in its rays.

When mounted on the tall, strong roan by her side—

"O, are they not a beautiful pair!" exclaimed Ruth under her breath who had observed their mount.

"If they do pair," was the response of the father.

Cora and Roy led the procession, followed by Ruth and her father. The Winters and George walked.

It was a fresh, mid-September morning. The atmosphere was clear, full of sunshine and electricity. The distance a little over two miles through beautiful open woodlands. Cora was full of the exhilarating unrest of high spirits, expectation, and conscious beauty. There was also the gratified wish to please. There may have been a fleeting thought of Boston eyes to admire. It was but a flash, as with blush and laugh she abandoned herself to the joyous life which stirred in her heart. She spoke gay, bright words with little liquid laughs, and permitted herself to be admired by the eyes of the silent youth at her side, which paid full homage to her loveliness. She had been so homesick in the endless woods, and now the natural gladness of heart and buoyancy of spirit came back to her. When she began really to talk, it was of the beautiful elastic animal she rode, mingled with little pats and caresses with her hand. Then it came to her to ask: "Has she a name? What is it?"

"Una," he replied.

"Una! O, that is a lovely name; and him you ride?"

"Red Cross."

"Red Cross? why do you call him Red Cross?"

"Well, I had been reading the Fairy Queen."

"O-o, but I did not know there was a horse of that name in the book, only a knight who wore a red cross."

"I fancied he was like the horse ridden by the Red Cross knight. He was then four years old—my first horse. My father purchased him for me to ride to Ohio, and I rode him all the way, when I did not walk. That was ten years ago, when I was thirteen," unconsciously disclosing his age and something of his history.

"O!" just a little one, from Cora, as her eyes flashed over him. "How you must love him," and mentally: "he is twenty-three. I did not think he was more than twenty." The three years advanced him. She was nineteen, and thought of that, as would any young girl.

"I do love him," was the answer. "He was proud and headstrong then, and, like Red Cross' horse, sometimes angry."

"His angry steed did champ his foaming bit,
As much disdainful to the curb to yield."

He quoted the lines well, and Cora looked very intently at him, a little surprised. Then recalling her thoughts:

"So he is sixteen or seventeen years old. What a noble horse he is. He looks as if he might have been in battle," she said.

"He has. My father rode him at the battle of the Thames."

"Why, Roy! your father was in that battle—and this grand old horse? O, I want to put my hand on him." She laid her gloved hand on the scant mane. "Red Cross, you gallant old war-horse! and you bore your master well through the fire and smoke of a glorious battle. Well! well! He is called major?" speaking of the father; still caressing the horse's mane.

"He was on General Harrison's staff all through the campaign."

"O, he was? I shall ask him all about it." And then with her face aglow she turned back

to tell her father and Ruth of Red Cross and the Major. When she regained her place she said: "Una, of course, she was not in the war?" with a look which asked further and much more.

"No." He turned his eyes away among the trees, "She was too young" he added.

"O!" "And mentally he was young, too, and too soft to shed the blood of the wild things of the woods. Of course he could not dare the carnage of battle," with her wide questioning eyes still on him. She drew a long, quivering breath. An expression of disapproval flashed across her face like a glimmer of lightning. There was almost contempt in it. There was a moment's silence between them.

"Tell me all about Una," she said, now very gracious again.

"She was a present from General Harrison."

"O, was she, the precious love! Ruth!" calling back. "This blessed dear that I am on was a present from General Harrison. Ain't it wonderful!" She was to be told later to whom the present was made and why.

"She is what is called 'blooded.' She came before she was two years old. My father had a good many half wild horses then, and old Red Cross seemed to take to her, and care for her, so I called her Una."

"O, I might have known. The sweetest princess of all the—the long—book. Quote me something if only a line about her, or tell me the substance in your own words. Oh, I must re-read the first canto. Please, some little thing." With such a voice and look, no one could refuse. He complied:

"A lovelie ladie rode him fair beside
Upon an ass more white than snow,
Yet she much whiter; but the same did hide
Under a veil, that wimpled was full low,
And over all a black"—

something 'she did' something with, as if some other thing troubled her, or had happened to her, or she was afraid it would, or something—there"—laughing at his failure to recall the lines, in which Cora joined her own musical laughter.

"Well I don't care; I can't help laughing," she cried so winsomely.

"And I can't help forgetting what I never knew well. The last line of that stanza I do remember:

"And by her in a line a milk white lamb she led."

"O that redeems her, and you, you have read a good deal?"

"No, very little, I fear. Some things of knights and ladies," blushing, "we have some books. I would be glad to show you them, if you like books."

"I do love books dearly, and so does Ruth; we shall be glad to see them."

They had crossed the little creek, and reached the rude fence of fallen trees, which Roy explained was the northern limit of a range for cattle. There was a passage way closed by movable bars, which were lying on the ground. They were now, as he said, half a mile from the cleared land. As they went on—"I am wondering," he said, "what father will think when he sees you. *She* was tall and formed not unlike you. May have been nearly as beautiful at your age, with"—he paused and did not take up the thread of his speech.

"Ah," was her thought, "that is the attraction!" His words implied that he thought her more beautiful even than his mother at her age. She wondered if that was his thought.

"Your mother must have been beautiful—certainly to you," she said gravely.

"She was the most beautiful woman to me that I had ever seen, till"—then for the first time the force of what he had said and was about to say unconsciously, came upon him.

He colored almost violently. A motion of his bridle hand, and Redcross made a demi-vault. Una was as quick. The trail was smooth and away they went with a springy gallop quite to the farm fence.

"O how exquisite!" cried the exhilarated girl, as they drew up. Perhaps the encomium included the young man's last speeches, and looking back, "We have run away from them, shall we turn back and meet them?"

"Of course," and back they went as fast as they had departed.

As they approached, the sedate Ruth held up a reproving finger—"Children in the woods—I am astonished! you forget this is the Holy Sabbath!" she cried with assumed solemnity.

"Only Sunday in the woods," Roy answered gravely, with a smile on his lips, however.

"We will be good children, won't we?" said Cora, pulling a long face, with a glance into the eyes of her escort, from the margins of her own, with the color playing in the dimples, which would keep their places quivering in her cheeks. At the great gate giving entrance to the cleared grounds, nearly the whole population of Castle Gregory, except the chief, were assembled, as if for a popular demonstration in favor of the strangers, as in fact it was. Though curious, the score or more thus gathered maintained a most respectful silence. None of them had ever before seen such women as the Hillman daughters, and while they were by no means unanimous, the younger, perhaps, because she was attended by their young chief, received the most attention.

"How pleased and glad they look," said the gratified child, nodding graciously to them as she passed.

"They are more surprised. They never saw anybody like you and your sister. Nor

had I for all these years," with the sincerity of a child.

"Roy," she replied, with a sweet seriousness, "I shall not permit you to flatter me. It will not please me."

"Does that mean to say more than the truth in one's favor, to mislead?"

"Something like that, I think."

"I said less, with no design," dropping his eyes.

"And I said Simple Roy the other day and—"

"Told the simple truth," gravely—interrupting her.

"Mr. Gregory, I shall have to go back to that *persiflage*, you deal so much in it," she said with the dimples again playing in her cheeks.

As they entered, the ground arose before them in a gentle swell, from the upper level of which they had a good lookout over the 200 acres of cleared land, in nearly a square, disfigured alone by the stumps of the native trees, and made picturesque by two or three groves of the smallest ones, left with care, with here and there a grand old elm whose stately beauty saved it in solitary pride. Gently undulating on the side upon which the visitors entered, with a slope toward the river, which under the arid forenoon sun, formed a silvery, thread-like boundary, along the remote southern border, shining against the dark wall of forest, standing solidly on its further bank. Pasture lands of rich green lay all about them. Beyond on the right was a breadth of ripening corn, on the left the brown stubble of wheat, while the lower land was a meadow. Here the Bostonians paused, sick and weary of the eternal monotony of the trees, to rest and medicate their eyes and souls with the longed-for green of the grass, and the loveliness of this heart of civilization in the savage bosom of nature.

"O how beautiful! how exquisitely lovely!" exclaimed the delighted Cora, dropping her reins and clasping her hands as her eyes in an ecstasy moved slowly over the beautiful and widely extended prospect. "O, I can breathe here! O papa! O Ruth! is it not like paradise?" Allowance must be made for Cora. Ruth, who drew up to her side, sat with brimming eyes, taking the whole into her heart and soul in silence.

"You see, boys, what well directed labor and effort can do in the farthest off deep of wilderness," cried the father in a glow to the young men who stood near. "Take heart, we can conquer, as you see. Did you ever see such grass, such corn? Wheat grows here! Look at those sleek, fat, lazy cattle." Several of which were feeding near by.

"And so that is Castle Gregory?" said Cora, whose eyes had several times rested in their wanderings upon the wide group of dark, rude buildings, which covered a slight eminence not two hundred yards to their left front. From the center arose the square wooden upper-story of the mansion house, blackened by the storms and suns of its twenty years. From that main body, wings flanked out to other and smaller structures, in the erection of which the ax was the principal implement employed. It was surrounded by numerous other buildings all of the same primitive architecture. Two or three dwellings, barns, stables, corn cribs, smoke houses, hen roosts, dog kennels, every variety of the one pattern of the forest. In and around these structures were seen the tops of several thrifty fruit trees, apple, peach, plum, and cherry, and the whole, to the extent of two or three acres, were surrounded and flanked by vegetable gardens and forest trees. This group of buildings concentrated the eyes of the visitors, who made various remarks to each other of the appearance presented to their unwatched eyes, mindful of the presence

of the young master, who sat with eyes on the ground, save as he raised them when he answered a question or to steal a glance at the rapt face of Cora, permitting his eyes sometimes to stray to Ruth who said little. All the effusive words of the younger were treasured as diamonds and jewels in his charmed memory. He purposely halted at this commanding point to enable his visitors to look over the plantation, and then conducted them to the entrance through a post and rail fence which protected the immediate homestead. As they now went forward, several dogs came out to swell the attendance, some of which gave tongue and were sharply reprimanded by Roy, who called them by name, when they immediately became mute. Among them were Luna and Leo, whom Cora recognized. "O! they know me," was her pleased exclamation when she saw that they remembered her.

The main building fronted the south, where the party found the proprietor standing near its principal entrance to receive them, supported by the noble old Bruno mastiff, who gravely sat the while the only unconcerned member of the household.

Cora was the first to receive the master's attention. As she drew up he stepped forward to her horse's side.

"Welcome, welcome to all I have," he said graciously, taking her in both arms from her saddle, and then as she stood coloring under the warmth of his reception, he added: "If I could choose a daughter—permit this to my age," and he bent and touched her brow with his lips. She was for a moment embarrassed. As her eyes flashed up to his face she saw tears in his eyes.

He turned from her to Ruth, who had gained her feet and to whom he gave his hand. "It is a happy day when you come." To the father, "I am very glad to have you all with me, Mr. Hillman. I can give you

all the rude comforts with rest and shelter, after your long journey, and your daughters must spare me some of their presence. They will see how much we need them."

The young ladies, with the young wife, were shown up a dark stairway to the guest chamber, and then all assembled in the principal room of the house, reception, dining, and drawing-room, where more words were said by the stilleffusive host.

"Cities form manners," he said in conclusion, to Mr. Hillman. "The woods bring out the feelings;" to Ruth, and to Cora; "warmth must supply our lack of grace, Miss Cora."

"Indeed, Judge Gregory, you charm us with both," she managed to say in reply.

Then all the household came in, and hymn books were produced, the Judge read a hymn, and Mr. Hillman led off with a fitting tune, of which his daughters carried the air effectively. Then Roy read one of Blair's short sermons, doing it fairly well, and the Judge extemporized a prayer, another hymn was sung, and the worship concluded. The Judge and the Hillmans were Presbyterians and to the guests the exercises were a very pleasant surprise.

The young people went out and found some early ripe peaches and wild plums. There they found the noble mastiff, who at once took possession of Roy, to the great annoyance of Luna, who quite monopolized him inside, and was his usual attendant abroad. Cora found much to admire in Bruno, who endured her caresses with good natured toleration, seeming to regard her as a pleasant light weight.

The dinner was quite an affair, characterized by profusion rather than elegance or good taste. A roasted wild turkey, a saddle of venison, also roasted with plum sauce, wild, of course, were really both wonderful. There were other game dishes, and well cooked. The table service would now com-

mand a sum, as a museum of curios, partly china, some silver, much britannia, pewter, and earthen. Ruth saw the truth of the Judge's remark. There had never been any but women of the border in the house. Coarse profusion, the odds and ends of mismatched furniture, mahogany tables at which some of the guests sat on three-legged stools. The links which should unite the parts of any whole were wanting, and were not now missed by even the Judge. After dinner the young ladies overhauled the books with Roy's aid, and then he and the young men made an excursion to the river, where they found several boats.

In their absence the young ladies fell into the hands of old Peter, who was a willing and effusive cicerone. He was the most picturesque character of the domain. Born a borderer of Virginia, a famous hunter in his time and an Indian fighter, a shattered leg had disqualified him for very active service. He came into the woods with the proprietor of the castle. He took care of the guns, boats, and dogs, worshiped Roy as nearly his ideal, with great defects of character. The youth had an erroneous over estimate of Indians as human beings, and a weakness for books. With these drawbacks the young man had no equal. Under his guidance Ruth and Cora, with the young Mrs. Winters, explored a large, dimly-lighted room, a sort of arsenal and museum, containing the guns, fish-spears, bows and arrows, paddles, oars, fishrods, with many Indian relics and curiosities of the age of stone, and various properties. He showed them the famous bear spear and told the tale of the bear's death, slain with this very spear. As he told the story, the rescue of young Omic had little to do with Roy's motive in attacking the bear, described as more formidable than a grizzly. This led to a discussion of the Indian question, during

which Ruth got a hint of the rescue of the returned band on the Chagrin, and drew the whole out. His attempt to excuse the young man's conduct in the affair was lame and amusing to the young women. Then came the tale of the youth's escapade from the castle and going to the war, containing an account of the battle of the Peninsula, which according to this historian was fought mainly by Roy Gregory. Then followed in detail his exploits largely imaginary, in the siege of Fort Meigs, especially his performances as a sharpshooter, during which he produced "Old Meigs," a rough, half-stocked rifle, of huge caliber, carrying a three-ounce ball, of corresponding weight. He told how the Indians clomb into the tree tops from which they killed men in the fort, until Roy, as he said, with this rifle, killed so many of them that they abandoned it as too dangerous. He then made a direct appeal to Cora.

"You came on the bay mare," he said.

"O General Harrison's present! I want to know?"

"Sartin as ye live, Miss, Ginral Harrison gin 'im that ar critter fer killin' them very Ingins," all the particulars of which he gave in a very ghastly and convincing way. I do not vouch for the entire accuracy of Peter's statements. Roy bore the big rifle home, and it bore the name of "old Meigs." It is more than probable that he killed an Indian with it, and it is certain that the colt Una, when she arrived, was understood to be a present to the young man. Then there was Omic's knife, and a search for the famous call or whistle, made of the bear's tusk, which he could not find, and said he supposed Roy had it with him. He finally cut the exhibition and stories short. He did not want to have the young man find him there.

The tales and trophies were a surprise to Cora. She was unwilling to believe them.

She wanted some corroboration. It might be that this supple youth, with a red mouth like a girl, and the large lustrous eyes of a woman, might be capable of these things. She would wait for confirmation.

"Well," said Ruth, as they were on their way to the house, "what do you say of the chronicles of Peter the hermit?"

"His legends of the young lord of the castle? Ha, ha, ha! Oh, he is an arrant old romancer. Why, Ruth, he dares not have his hero know that he told these—these fictions of him."

"He knows he is modest as he is."

"Yes, as becomes one soft and tender. O, Ruth! Well, one thing—I rather like that beard after all."

"Pretty, is it not? O Cora!"

"Pretty is the word, pretty—pretty fellow—a pretty man. What a word to apply to a man, and what a man that it can be applied to. I am sorry you used it, Ruth."

"Well now, Cora, let me venture a prediction, concerning this soft, pretty fellow."

"Yes, do; but keep and tell it when it comes true; that will be ever so much nicer," said the annoying girl.

"Well, I can wait," added Ruth, not greatly pleased.

Peter had said at parting, that "The young feller wouldnt like it, ef 'e knowed I'd been a-tellin' on 'im."

This was significant to the young lady, whose ideal was a man full-grown, with will, and granite. She admired the Judge with all his years and iron-gray hair.

Mr. Hillman, George, and the Winters left for home ere the day was well spent. They went freighted with fruits and vegetables. The young ladies would remain till after supper, and go attended by Roy.

CHAPTER IV.

THE JUDGE PRONOUNCES A JUDGMENT.

Roy delayed the homeward movement of the young ladies till the full moon was well above the tree tops. As they started, Luna, Leo, and some others of the dogs attempted to be of the party. He forbade them, saying, "they would make a carousal through the woods if they went."

"You doubtless found Peter interesting," he observed to them as they moved slowly away. His voice was that of one piqued.

"We did, very," said the younger, with a glance at Ruth.

"You must have discovered that there was an element of exaggeration and fiction in his stories—mainly fiction."

"I am sure he believes them himself," said Ruth.

"He does, and he cannot distinguish the truth from the other parts of his own tales," he answered.

"Well I believe every word he told us," said Cora. Ruth opened her eyes at this.

"Your faith does you credit, Miss Cora. He has the wish to tell a thing as it occurred, but he is always unhappy in his information." There was vexation now in his tones, as well as a spice of sarcasm in the words.

"He showed us the bear spear and old Mies, and I am riding your mare, this love of a Una," added Cora in her baffling way, "and sometime you will let me see and hear that wonderful call;" this was a little teasingly said, "and I expect you will then confirm all he said," in fine irony. He let the subject drop without further word; and Cora by way of compensation told her sister the names of the horses and why they were so called, and the party relapsed into silence, riding slowly over the pasture lands, Roy vexed and not knowing how to take the words of Cora; the

thoughtful Ruth's mind was of the young ones by her side. She was strong under the broken fortunes and exile of her family and serene under the burden of her own memories, if such she bore. With a woman's quick instincts, she surrounded these two with the nimbus of romance. Surely there was very much in the life, person, and character of the youth, which must appeal strongly to the heart and imagination of a young girl. She feared she did not fully understand Cora's nature, to whom, under a superficial lightness, she ascribed the strong, deep qualities of the highest womanhood. She knew she was more matter of fact than herself, like their father. She was certain that her fancy even had never been more than touched. She knew that this forest youth did not fill all the outlines of the child's ideal. The lack was in the stronger qualities, iron, granite, the masterful in men. He might lack these. He had the softness of his mother, rather than the will, sternness, and strength of his father. He was soft and tender notwithstanding his life and surroundings. He, as yet, had nothing of the world, of society, which Cora so much prized. She would miss the worldliness of the world. Both were undeveloped. They were strangely thrown together, must associate much, and under circumstances favorable to what she felt were her wishes for them. Cora had never behaved better than on to-day; natural and winning, she went to the castle of this barony of the woods, as she called it, in the garments of its mistress, was received as its lady might have been, seemed herself to play the role naturally, as if she appreciated and liked it. Why should she not? And now half pensive, with the light half-veiled in her eyes, she was riding away at the end of the first day by his side, casting little furtive glances up at him, on his tall horse. As to him and his father there could be no doubt. The doubt was of her sister.

Thus musing she fell behind them as they passed the boundary into the forest.

Cora looked at the night-black wood with vague dread, and as its first shadow fell upon her, something like a shudder ran through her frame. It was strange, and she attributed it to the weird mystery of darkness in the woods she was entering. It was like a spell of sorcery. The presence, if such it was, seemed also to impress the nervous intelligent creature that bore her. She lifted her head almost into the girl's face, threw her small pointed ears forward, and stepped hesitatingly as she entered the deeper shadow of the wood. The trained, alert Roy laid his hand on her neck, saying in a soothing voice, "It is nothing, girl, it is nothing," yet throwing his keen glances on their left, aware of the presence of some prowling thing, the stealthy step of which his ear already detected. They reached an open place in the edge of the forest, where was situate the boiling works—the headquarters of the sugar camp. Here much of the timber had been cut away, and they had the full light of the moon. As they gained this, there came from the left, just under the forest trees, a low smothered growl, followed by the leap of a heavy animal, now revealed in the moonlight. Una stopped suddenly, tossed up her head, and blew out a loud snort of alarm.

"It is a deer!" exclaimed Cora, greatly startled, yet assured as she caught sight of it on the leap. Its third or fourth leap was onto the side, high up, of an old leaning bass-wood, where it clung in full sight not twenty feet distant. At this strange feat the frightened girl uttered a half shriek, and Roy instantly halted the horses; Red Cross now showing signs of uneasiness and alarm. Up the tree with a tearing noise of nails and rending bark, the brute went rapidly, to a large limb which projected directly over the trail, some twenty feet from the ground, upon

which it crouched as if for a spring. It was in the brilliant light, and so near, that the glare of its fierce, yellow eyes, now flashing upon the travelers, was easily seen. They seemed to glow and burn with a lambent flame.

"O, what is it? what is it?" cried Cora, as it gained its position, shrinking toward her companion.

"It won't hurt you," he replied in his usual tone, as he rode in front of her, and forced Una back some feet, himself between her and the brute, which he confronted as he spoke. "Miss Hillman," calling to Ruth, who was still some yards behind. "Stop, don't be alarmed," and then to the terrified mare—"Una, girl, sweetheart, don't you see Red Cross and I are between it and you?" And to the now really frightened Cora, in a voice almost imperative, "Ride back, take Ruth. In the fields let her fly. Tell old Peter—old Meigs—the bearspear—let."

"And you! you!" she cried, as the sense of his deadly peril fell upon her.

"Don't think of me, I will face the thing." Almost gayly this was said.

"Go!" he added, with a pull of the mare's rein, as he liberated her head.

Lightly the lithe creature swung shortly about, on her hind feet. Ruth turned also. She caught the words—"It is a horrid,"—as the fleeing mare passed her. As Cora swept through the trees, there came after her a clear, sharp, loud, shrill, prolonged note like that of the upper register of a cornet, piercing the hearts of the trees, cleaving space, reaching the hiding places of silence, long drawn, louder and louder, and dying away in tremulous, mournful trills. Once again it came stronger, louder, clearer, the dying trills repeated with fine effect.

Instantly followed the voice the same she heard at the pond, yet now an hundred fold

more compelling, imperious, persuading, beyond her conception of the human voice, up through the tree-tops, to the very stars, it seemed to go, ending in a strain of two or three notes, rising, the last prolonged. It was from the imperiled youth calling his faithful dogs to battle. It was a call to Cora to Una. She raised her hands and seemed to fly. The beat of Una's feet was like the roll of a drum. Something white she saw. It flashed past like a meteor. It was Leo flying to his imperiled master. Then came the suppressed voice of Luna, striving hard after. Then the heavy leaps of the great mastiff, and a rabble of undistinguished dogs, bounding and yelping, swept past. With one or two gasps of prayer, her heart standing still, skimming the surface as does the low-flying swallow, and Una checked and held herself up before the main entrance of the mansion.

All was excitement. The note of the bear tusk call had reached every ear. The dogs were off in an instant. No such alarm had disturbed the castle since Roy's rescue of old Peter from wolves, in the first year of the war. Most of the males with the Judge were in front of the house, as Una, bearing the breathless girl, dashed up, with gasps between her words—"He wants—old Meigs—Peter, the bear speare—everybody gracious God—go-go-o-o" she cried. Peter was already armed; at the first word he was off, followed by the others.

The Judge sprang to the girl, and was supporting her when she spoke. He turned to give an order. None but women were within hearing. "What is it, tell me?" he said, a little excited. She swallowed once or twice.

"Roy! Roy! a horrid beast on a tree. He faces it—with burning eyes—may leap on him. He hurried me back. He must face it, he said so. The thing's eyes burn;" correcting.

"And Ruth?"

"Is coming back. O! O! it was so awful to see. It growled and sprang up a tree."

"And you are not overcome. You are a heroine. You deserve to stand by a brave man. I must go and see what it is." The Judge was excited.

"And I will go with you," reining Una and moving by his side.

They met Ruth in the outside field, who turned back with them. The Judge strode on very rapidly, the girls keeping with him. They had passed half of the distance when the thundering explosion of "Old Meigs" arrested their steps. Like a small field piece it roared out in the stillness of the night. The distant wall of trees across the river sent it back, and all the woods around the cleared lands repeated it. With its first echo came a fierce brute scream of rage and agony, which was lost in the mingled howls, growls, yells, and barks of all the dogs, who seemed to have closed with something. Then arose the shouts of the men and boys over the brute din. A half minute and the clear authoritative voice of Roy was heard calling off the dogs by name, "Bruno! Leo! Tiger! Luna! Griff!"

"God be praised! Praise the Lord! He is safe. He killed it!" cried the Judge, in a voice which showed how much he was relieved.

They at once started forward, the Judge almost on the run, in his eagerness. At the great gate they met Roy himself. "Oh, you are coming," he said. "Well, it is all over. I fear the ladies were a little frightened. I'm afraid I did not manage it very well."

"Frightened! Not managed! In heaven's name what was it?" the excited Judge demanded.

"Not much; only a cat. Don't take them there, father," entreatingly.

"Only a cat?" helping the girls to alight; "well, we will see this 'only a cat.' If all

this outcry was only for a cat, young man, we will look to it."

His voice and manner showed to the youth that he was greatly moved. He turned away in silence, and the party moved forward. Cora cast some anxious looks in the young man's direction as she passed him, but said nothing. What did she think now? In the open space under the unobstructed rays of the moon extended, on its side, lay the slain beast, surrounded by the still excited men, boys, and dogs. The approaching party was discovered, and the men and boys left one side clear for their observation.

"It is a panther!" exclaimed the Judge, in surprise, "I say it is a panther!" he repeated, looking sternly around, as if he would like to hear that contradicted. "A monster! The largest ever seen in the woods," in a more subdued tone, to the young ladies. "Yes, the king of the woods lies here dead." With majesty of manner these words were spoken.

"The Major says the true word," said Peter coming forward to support his chief; "a bigger painter never jumped no whars."

"How was this, Peter—you were here, tell me all about it?"

"Wal, Major, it was about this ere," said the ready historian, not yet having time to add and embellish. "This is jest the hull on't. Ye see that ar ole basswood limb, jes over thar?" pointing to the perch, so near that it seemed quite overhead. "Wal thar'e lay an' right jist about here, whar the critter lays, stans Roy."

"My God, Peter!" with a glance at Cora, was the Judge's exclamation. "So near as that?"

"That's jest it, Major. Yer see I allers has 'er ready (meaning old Meigs) an' I was lame—not much. I jest heern a yelp or so from one o' the pups. Wal, right thar whar the young lady stans, mebbly two steps back

o' whar the critter lays, stood ole Red, an' 'im on 'im, a lookin' the beast out o' countenance all the time."

"Do you mean Roy sat there within an easy spring of the panther, when you came up?" asked the Judge eagerly.

"Right thar, on ole Red, jest in easy jump-in', Major."

"The creature might have leaped onto him," exclaimed the Judge.

"No painter jumps onto Roy Gregory, an' him a facin' on im. Wal, ole Brew was a sottin' down clus by a helpin' stare at the cuss, with 'is mouth a waterin' fur im, an' Leo an' the rest war jest hushed back a leetle an' stood a shiverin'. Wal, when 'e heern me. 'Peter,' sez 'e, 'is that you,' sez 'e. 'It is,' I sez. 'Got ole Meigs?' he ast, 'an' all right?' 'Ere she is,' sez I. 'Bring 'er 'ere,' sez 'e, slippin' down. 'Take ole Red back,' sez 'e, an' I done it quicker'n scat. Some-'ow 'is gittin' off an' turnin' 'is eye broke the spell, an' the cuss was a makin' redly for to jump, an' I was on han' with the bar sticker, wen Roy, seein' what the critter was up to, ups an' steps forrard an' fires quicker'n a flash. The varmit gin a screem ye might a heern a mile, an' wus in the ar as she bellered. He lit right whar Roy stood, an' 'e wan't thar, but ole Brew 'n Leo an' the hull tarnal pack was, though, 'n I wan't fur off. That's the way on't, Major. Now jes see 'ere," stepping forward and lifting one of the powerful fore paws of the brute, and pointing to a ragged hole just within the point of the shoulder. "Do you see that ar, Major? Wal, that's war 'e tuck 'er; an' 'ere," going around, and showing a corresponding wound in the opposite hip, 'is whar she come out. Ye see, she lay on the lim' a liddle lengthways, an' had ter turn inter line as she jumped. Wal, she 'adn't quite straightened inter line w'en 'e sen t thunder 'n lightnin' through 'er, eenymos'

lengthways. She struck dead 's a las' year's bird's nest. Now that's not bad shutin by moonshine, an' 'im not knowin' wat'l 'appen, Major—not bad shutin I calls it.”

The Judge heard without heeding the details of Peter's tale. With the position which Roy occupied, and that of the panther, he took in all the peril to which the youth, as he thought, had so rashly and foolishly exposed himself. This perhaps gave his thankfulness for Roy's escape the form of the mother's feelings, who, on receiving a child from imminent danger, slaps while she embraces it, in pure gratitude. There was now way for reproof of this foolhardiness.

“Where is Roy?” he demanded in a voice which startled his hearers, throwing his eyes about on the faces of the eager throng near him.

“Up by the hosses,” answered an urchin.

They were standing near where the young ladies had dismounted. Red Cross had turned back, and followed Roy when he went to meet his father, and attempted to dissuade him from going upon the battle ground. Roy held them at this point, as offering conveniences for mounting the young ladies. Here the Judge approached him accompanied by the sisters. He probably was himself unaware of the strength and nature of his own feelings at the time, certainly what he said was not premeditated. He was not in a meditative frame of mind.

“And so, young man, you hold your life at nothing,” he began in a hard voice. “Your estimate of it may be just. You sat under an enraged panther, unarmed, to see which could look the more foolish at the other.” There was scorn and contempt in the voice, as well as in the words and manner. “When help comes, you must put yourself more completely in the brute's power, with nothing but flint, steel, and gun powder. What a fool!”

At first the youth looked up, then as the torrent of contempt and sarcasm grew angry, he dropped his head, when it ceased he walked around the other side of Una, laid his arm over her neck, and rested his head on his hand, with his face turned from his father, and remained silent. Many had followed the Judge, and heard his words with amazement. The young ladies with fright and almost torture. He stood for a half minute regarding his son in silence. Then he turned back and called Peter. To him he said: “This monster must be skinned with the head and claws, and preserved as a trophy.”

“I'll make a buty on 'er, Major. Ye may say what ye will; a cooler 'n truer 'n braver man never pulled a trigger if 'e did save Ingins. I'd jes like to fight fer 'im.” Defiantly this was spoken.

“Yes, yes, Peter,” said the Judge, turning back to where Roy was still standing with the horses. The young ladies were but a few steps distant, and now made a movement toward the horses also. The observant youth placed the mare in a position by the fallen trunk of a tree for her rider to mount from. The Judge, without a word, took the rein from his hand, and placed her in the saddle. Silently the young man performed this office for Ruth, who dared not trust her voice to thank him. From her he turned to Red Cross, and led him forward to his father, and held his stirrup. When the Judge was mounted he turned to give some further directions to Peter and the men, when Roy spoke for the first time since meeting his father at the gate.

“Of course, you will return to our house for the night, he said, addressing Ruth. “I will step across the woods and tell your father. He might be uneasy.”

“No, no, Roy, you shall not go into these awful woods again to-night.”

"What is it?" asked the Judge, now turning to them. There was still a little strain in his voice.

"The young ladies will stop at Castle Gregory, and I will notify Mr. Hillman," answered Roy very quietly.

"Right—right; well thought of, my son. I am obliged to you," now very graciously speaking.

"You certainly will not let him go alone," interposed Cora, in alarm at the thought, and speaking with spirit.

"No, no, my brave girl. I will send back the horses, and men shall carry torches;" and he gave some orders to secure this attendance. Then he conducted the visitors out from under the trees into the fields. It was almost an infinite relief to them to be out of the shadow of the awful woods, as Ruth called them. They rode slowly abreast the three, with Cora between the Judge and her sister. As they gained the open pasture lands flooded with light, she said to the Judge:

"I want to tell you one thing, Judge Gregory." There was hesitation yet spirit in the tones, as if it might be unpleasant, yet she would say it.

"Anything—you can say anything to me; even to telling me I am an unjust judge." He had been suddenly placed under the greatest strain, as suddenly removed, and his voice now had a little plaint in it, almost a tremor, though his manner was almost gay.

"You see the panther was on my side, and when he sprang into the tree Roy rode round in front of me, to save me. We were right close to him, and he forced Una back a little. That was why he was there in that dangerous place." Her voice trembled and broke to a sob in spite of her, as she concluded her explanation.

"O, was that the way?" eagerly.

"Yes, when he backed Una he said he must face it. Then, without turning from it, he

told me to go back—to let Una fly. O, he knew his peril, though I did not." There came another sob. "His voice was bright and gay. It made me almost brave. O, he is the bravest man that breathes," she said with spirit.

"So his voice made you brave?" said the Judge, nearly overcome. "You deserve to have the bravest man rush between you and a wild beast; and you sent him reinforcements in time. You are a heroine."

"You have been in battle, Judge Gregory—he is the bravest man. Don't you think he is?"

"He is my son," he said, abashed by her warmth, and the strength of his own words. "He is brave—too brave—is the trouble. What more was there?"

"You see Una saw it, or heard it, before I did. It was on our side. She knew more than I did, the blessed dear; I shall love her to the end of life;" patting her shoulder. "I wish you had heard him talk to her, to soothe and quiet her. He called her his 'Girl,' his 'Sweetheart' as tenderly. Then he turned her back and told her to go." Then came another sob; and a half groan escaped the Judge. "I passed Ruth, then came that wild, fearful—oh, so wild and mournful call—twice, and then his voice. Then the flash of Leo, and I was at the house, and hearing my own voice. How strange it sounded to me! Was there ever such a time?"

The Judge was quite overcome. He raised his hand to his face and said as to himself: "Poor boy! Poor boy! His mother died, I carried him into the woods. He has no girl, no sweetheart, nothing to love or love him but dogs and horses." There was real anguish in the voice as well. "And Miss Cora, you and your sister think I was cruel, brutal to him, a few minutes ago. I have been more inhuman to him than that; how much I have

injured him I never knew till we met you the other day. I have kept him here to grow up a young barbarian, and now he feels how impossible it is for him to—to—you see, my dear girl, what a weak old man I have become myself, here in the woods," trying to smile.

"O Judge Gregory!" said the now moved Ruth. "It is unjust to yourself as to Fitzroy, to reproach yourself for supposed lack in him. I see a thousand noble things in him, and never think of what you call his deficiencies. I would not part with a grain of his manliness for all the outside polish of the world of society. He will catch that in a week when he wants it."

"Thank you, thank you, Miss Hillman. You are very kind," said the pleased father with fervor, much relieved. The freedom of the wilderness and the strange incidents of life in its surroundings had within these three or four days, within the last three or four hours, caused these parties unconsciously to reveal their natures and characters to each other more entirely than a life time would have done in their native Massachusetts. How much and how fully they had done this, no one at that time observed. Perhaps they never thought of it in that light.

When they dismounted the Judge directed the man who came with them to place his own saddle upon the mare, and take her for his son's use, "and say to him that he go armed with attendants and torches, and that the dogs be permitted to go also." The man was instructed to say to Roy that this was his father's wish, and not a command—an important difference.

It was with a feeling of devout thankfulness that the sisters again found themselves in the well-lighted family room, where a cheery fire was blazing in the stone fireplace, radiating color, warmth, and safety, and they

sank into seats before it with a feeling of almost infinite relief and real blessedness. Strong of character and firm of nerve, of revolutionary parentage, toned up by the well-sustained labors of their long journey, they nevertheless were greatly shaken by the incidents of the last hour. The Judge was detained outside by various cares, and had hardly joined them when he was called out again. This was to be told by his man, that when on his way to the woods he met the whole party, who were bringing in the slain panther on a litter, and was informed that Roy started alone for the Hillman's before the Judge was out of the woods. He did not carry even the bear lance, nor permit any of the dogs to go with him. The message struck the Judge like a blow. He remembered to regret among other things, his words to Cora, that the youth should go with torch bearers and armed attendants, and this he thought had much to do with Roy's sudden and solitary departure. Spite of him when he returned to his guests his face showed marks of agitation. His manner was possessed though he was quite perfect in his attention to the sisters. That some new annoyance had arisen they suspected, what it was they were spared the knowledge of that night.

A cup of real tea hot and fragrant, nicely cut jerked venison, with cold biscuit and crab apple preserves, were brought in with a bottle of rare old wine. The tea was drank, the wine and preserves tasted. The sisters would not retire till Roy's return. Ruth led the willing Judge to talk of the absent young man. She took him purposely over the ground of Peter's narratives, and found that there was a substantial basis of truth in them all. Una was General Harrison's present to Roy, not for any specific Indians slain. Roy was always shy of telling what he had done, or may have supposed he had done.

He also told of the rescue of Peter. The wolves had driven him into a low tree, where he was only just out of their reach. He dropped his gun in his haste to get into it. When Roy, with his tomahawk and old Bruno, dashed in among them. Peter always felt that the adventure was discreditable to him, and never made reference to it, voluntarily.

The minutes passed slowly to the father, and for his comfort as well as that of his guests, he said panthers were seldom heard of in the Ohio woods. That he had himself never seen one alive, nor but one dead before this. He thought Roy and the hunter, Brady, of whom he told the girls, had killed one before the war. That the Indians regarded the slaying of a panther a feat as honorable as to kill an enemy in battle.

The best part of an hour had passed when an inner door opened and Roy entered. He came from his room, where he had replaced his riding boots with moccasins. He entered noiselessly, and went hesitatingly forward, paused, and as no one at first spoke to him, he moved backward again and stood a little shrinkingly near the door by which he came in.

The Judge certainly started a little when he saw him, and though accustomed to his gliding, silent movements, he must for an instant have thought that it was the young man's presentment.

"Why, Roy," he exclaimed when certain. "Is that you; I thought it was your ghost." He arose and stepped forward eagerly, and laughing a little roughly at the conceit, gave the youth his hand very cordially.

The young man took it in both his own, raised it, bent his head and placed his lips upon it, saying, "I am glad, father."

Tears came into the father's eyes, as into those of the guests, at the act so filial, natural, and graceful.

Turning to the sisters, "Your father and George are well. The whole party reached home without accident and in good time. Mr. Hillman and George send their love and good-night. I—I thought," blushing, laughing, and stammering. "I thought they might send good-night kisses, but they did not. I—I dared not offer to bring them." It was very well said or very prettily said, after all, as both of the sisters thought. Ruth playfully regretted this lack of courage, with a look at Cora, in whose cheeks the dimples now appeared for the first time during the evening. They wished to know if the adventure alarmed them, and what they said of it?

"Well, Peter was not there to tell the story, and I made nothing at all of it. Indeed, I came near having to invent an excuse for not conducting you home," he said.

"I can vouch for that," said the Judge, a little dryly.

Cora asked quite tenderly about Una, how she behaved.

He walked, and by a shorter route, he said:

"Did he meet any cats?" "None to speak of." "How did Leo and Luna behave?" "He never took dogs into the forest in the night." The Judge watched the conversation with the liveliest interest, and more than once half determined to tell the sisters that he went alone and unarmed.

And then stepping forward a little, Roy said: "I must thank Miss Cora for her heroism. She hardly even started—not when under his fiery eyes. What I should have done without her, to bring up the artillery, the good Lord knows."

"You would not have been there, but for me," she answered, pleased by his words.

"Ah! I did not think of that. But then you got me out of it, and, father, they have both been so frightened that I want to give

her Bruno," and turning to her, "Will you accept him? He will guard your house, go with you in the woods, and defend you with his life. Nothing will dare approach you when he is with you. He will grapple with anything that prowls, or climbs, or leaps. He is more than a match for most things."

"O, that noble mastiff. I shall be so glad! I am sure I may accept him, Ruth," turning to her.

"I do not see why you may not. It will lay us all under a great obligation," Ruth answered frankly.

"And give us the most sincere pleasure," said the Judge warmly.

"O, I wonder if he will love me!" cried the now warm-faced Cora.

"Love you? What a question! Try him," was Roy's response.

"I will, gladly."

"He will not be demonstrative, but faithful and constant," added the Judge.

"O that will please me best," was the girl's reply, dropping her eyes.

Ruth poured the young man's tea in a tiny cup of china, which he drank, eating slices of the venison with such relish that the girls, under the influence of healthful sympathy, followed his example, and were joined by the Judge, who remarked "that they had awaited his return for the refection," at which the three smiled.

In their really pleasant room, after their return to it, the sisters sat in silence, Cora saying at length, "Don't tell me of it tonight—Ruth, your prophecy and its fulfillment; leave me to myself. I will never question the chronicles of Peter again."

Ruth approached and kissed her lips with tenderness. As they stood at the window commanding the side of their approach and departure of the day, they were surprised by the appearance of torches coming over the

pastures from the forest. They approached and entered the grounds of the homestead. These then were Roy's torch bearers.

"He went alone," said Cora, starting at the thought, "otherwise they would have been with him. He said he went by a shorter route."

"These may have stopped out there in the woods," answered Ruth, not caring to be more explicit of the thing in their minds, which both avoided.

"I think he went alone," rejoined Cora.

"Well, he is safe home, and it is a comfort to think that he is specially watched over."

"Was there ever anything more lovely than their meeting when he came in? But I won't talk of the things which happened this evening. Without these last the day was perfect."

"Would you be willing to have them blotted out, as if they had never been?"

"Not for the world!"

"I think there must be some things Judge Gregory would be glad if he could blot out," said Ruth.

"Let us not talk of them. He was hardly himself then."

"And then Roy came in and kissed his hand, as if seeking his pardon; as you say, there never was anything so lovely."

CHAPTER V.

CORA ASKS TO BE EXCUSED—ROY GOES A HUNTING.

Ruth was the first to awake the next morning. She stole from the side of her still sleeping sister to the window, to get a view of the outer world. What a morning! with the sun just touching the tops of the forest trees; the awful forest, of stealthy panthers, and all the unknown beasts of prey, of which such tales had reached her in safe New England. She had begun to think them tales of travelers, till the startling confirmation of

last night, when it seemed as if the woods were filled with fierce monsters. How peaceful and lovely the forest looked with its gaudy foliage, over which were flying masses, clouds, zones of the beautiful pigeons, now just appearing in the ripening beech woods. So bright, innocent, and serene was the prospect that she wanted Cora to share the charm with her. She was sleeping so deeply that she was reluctant to awaken her. When she did she regretted it, the child came with such reluctance from her land of dreams. She awoke as was her wont with smiles, even when called from slumber.

"And you know the significance of the dreams of a first night. What was yours?" she asked, as Cora sat in bed.

"Nothing of that horrid —" as the ugly thought came to her, giving her a little start.

"All that was hidden in the darkness of last night, and was borne off in its arms. It is all as innocent and lovely as Eden this morning. I want you to see it," Ruth answered.

"You are poetic, Ruth. O, I wanted to sleep," with a yawn.

When they went below they found all the household astir, and were surprised to see George and the younger Winter there. They were prepared for the information that Roy went alone the night before, and that after he left a party arrived from Castle Gregory with torches and guns, who said they were sent to attend the young man. From these they learned the real facts of the last night's adventure, and what the animal was, and who killed it. Indeed the Hillmans at home failed to learn from Roy that anything was slain. He spoke of seeing a cat which frightened the horses, and that his father thought the young ladies had better wait for daylight to go through the woods. The young men came to see the dead panther. They remained to breakfast, and soon after the appearance

of the sisters the Gregory household with the exception of Roy assembled at the table.

Here the sisters met the Judge for the first time that morning, who received them quite gayly. As the son was still absent Ruth inquired for him. No one knew where he was. The Judge was an early riser, but Roy was not in his room when he arose, nor had any of the household seen him that morning. It was the young man's habit to go out very early, the Judge said.

Breakfast was waiting and the party took their places at the table. A half minute later an outside door opened, and a beautiful, well-grown fawn leaped in and ran about with its dainty, sharp-pointed hoofs ringing on the bare floor. It was still in its spots and appeared quite at home. A moment later some of the guests were relieved by the entrance of Roy, who saluted them all pleasantly. He was in moccasins, and very soon some of the party detected a languor in his manner never before noticed in him.

At sight of the pretty deer Cora flew to it, clasped her arms around its slender neck, and had her cheek and lips upon its delicate head and long ears when Roy came in. She went on with her caresses, twittering all manner of girl endearments and terms of admiration, not seeming to notice his arrival.

The young man brought in two bouquets, one unique, made up of berries, wax scarlet, crimson, yellow, and brown, with a few brilliant leaves, put deftly together, which in the simplest way he presented to Ruth. The other, of late summer flowers and buds, with sprays of ground pines, he laid by Cora's plate.

"Did the Indian girls teach you how to put this exquisite thing together?" asked Ruth, struck by the effect of the offering.

"O, Indian girls know of but one use for berries, I fear," he answered, with a smile.

"Where was she yesterday?" Cora now asked the young man of the fawn, whom she persuaded to her seat at the table.

"Away with her wild kindred, and I have but just recovered her," he answered.

"O, you runaway! Why she ate bread!" as the pretty thing took a bit from her hand.

"And will drink milk," he added. "She is accomplished."

"Will she? Where did you find her?" she inquired.

"She found me—down by the river."

"O, she did? What a lovely bouquet. Thanks, Mr. Gregory," taking the flowers.

Something like languor, it may have been of kin to absence, Ruth fancied she detected in the air of the young man.

The poor boy never before occupied so abject a place in his own estimation. He had now no hope of exciting any special interest in the heart of Cora. His father's words for the time crushed him. He had called him a fool in her presence. He deplored in every way the adventure with the panther. Never thought that credit was due himself for slaying it. It was there, and of course must be killed, and that was all. To question the justice, the infallibility of his father never occurred to him any more than to answer back, with explanation or denial. The hurt came from a hand that disarmed pride and forbade resentment. The day had been so glorious, and Cora so sweet and considerate. She seemed possible to him quite all day. Then came that wretched adventure, fairly ambushing his way, and his father who knew him best, loved him best, pronounced upon him in her presence, took her horse from him, to mark his, and doubtless her, contempt of him. He was unworthy to place her in his mother's saddle. Not a word could be said to a mortal. He would be cheerful, had been. It was very, very hard to bear. Endurance in silence was his

only course. It was the lesson of his forest life. He ate a little on his return last night. He loathed and only toyed with food this morning.

On the lawn there was a romp by Cora and George, with the dogs and the fawn, which was very playful, and the dogs had been taught to respect her. Ruth noticed that Roy took no part in the play, so natural to his age and disposition. He called up Bruno and gave him to Cora, and the old fellow seemed to understand his dedication to her service.

To Ruth he gave the young deer, and said that for the present she had better remain at Castle Gregory.

Then the horses were brought round, and the Judge gallantly assisted Ruth into her saddle, while Roy was permitted to render a similar service for Cora, and they took their way over the pasture lands to the woods. Not until they struck the well worn trail did the sisters discover that it was not the way traveled yesterday, but avoided the scene of the adventure of last night.

"Oh, we have missed the place," cried Cora.

"Do you wish to see it?" the young man asked.

"Yes, I want to see how it looks by daylight."

"Did you purposely avoid it?" asked Ruth.

"It is bloody and trampled," was his answer.

"Let us go back to it," said Cora, turning her horse.

Roy led the way back and pointed out the localities of the tragedy.

Cora blanched and could not repress an exclamation of terror, as she now fully appreciated the proximity of the dangerous beast. Her questions Roy answered in the fewest words.

"It is painful to you;" she said to him.

"Very," was the sententious response, with no effort of concealment.

"I, I don't understand you;" she said very much surprised.

"No? You heard my father's judgment," turning away.

"O Roy! How sorry I am! and you went off through these dreadful woods alone."

"Are you afraid of them now?" He asked smilingly.

"Bruno seems to be disgusted with the place," said Ruth, who had not spoken, and wished to change the unfortunate conversation. "See how daintily he snuffs about."

The dog accompanied them to his new abode, and seemed to take as little interest in the place as his master; while the horses all showed signs of repugnance to it. Silently they turned on the trail.

"Your horse is frisky, Miss Hillman, and the trail good. Shall we run away from this place of blood? Even the horses will be glad to," Roy said. "Let us try a gallop."

As the two trained horses obeyed the signal, their example stimulated the steed ridden by the elder sister, and away they went gayly through the kindling forest till they reached the tree fence. There the cavalier dismounted to remove the bars. When he regained his saddle he found he had regained his usually good spirits also, and he told of his morning ramble on the river's bottom; proposed to pull the large boat up the pond the next morning, and make an excursion for them on its waters. Ruth noticed that the temporarily repressed gayety of Cora responded at once to the youth's lighter mood. She was considerate, wished for nothing so much as that the two should find a charm in companionship.

They reached the Hillman house in good spirits. Bruno inspected the place with

gravity, and was playfully instructed in his new charge by his former master, when, taking up a position favorable for observation, he sedately seated himself, as if entering upon his duties.

Roy said he was instructed by his father to leave the saddle and riding habit for Cora's use. Ruth looked grave, and while she acquiesced, she suggested that for the present they should be stored at Castle Gregory until their household was better established. With this the young man reluctantly complied. From his portmanteau he took two or three books which he brought for the reading of the sisters, of which two were the already famous novels, *Waverly* and *Guy Mannering*. The first of the "Great Unknown," as the author of them for many years was called. They were then without an author's name, and were hailed with louder acclaim than even the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* and the *Lady of the Lake*, and came to restore the waning glory of Scott. Roy secured an arrangement for the voyage on the lake, and took leave for the day.

His boat came from the hand of a master builder, and had navigated the Cuyahoga from Cleveland. It had regular oars and a tiller. Roy had it, with fishing tackle, at the upper beach at an early hour the next morning. It was a lovely day, the party were in high spirits, and the young ladies did most of the fishing, while George navigated the boat, all under the pupilage of Roy. Both the girls evinced aptitude with the rods. They were angling for the beautiful strawberry bass, but, as Roy used the small minnows for bait, they were several times taken by the larger black bass, some of which were captured. All the forenoon was spent on the pond, which was fully explored, and the take of fish was quite as many as the two young men could transport. Roy took his first dinner that day with the Hillmans,

which in some way he managed to regard as an event in his life.

The next day George tried his "prentice hand" on or at a deer, a fine doe, broadside, at something less than one hundred yards. Where he hit was never known, the deer remaining as ignorant as the sportsman. George himself was heard to express the opinion that the rifle was loaded without ball. He, however, secured a turkey, and the next day Roy sent them a dressed deer of his own shooting.

During these first days of the sojourn of the Hillmans in the neighborhood Roy felt the necessity of having an excuse for calling there. As a very small thing was sufficient, and he was not without invention, the days of his absence were few and marked. Each visit usually made an occasion for another. There were a good many excursions into the surrounding forests. One to the bottom lands for crab apples, one for wild grapes. Then the hickory nuts were ripening by the river, and the chestnuts on the sandy ridges. These were usually on horseback, in the maturing sunshine and golden October days, mid the falling leaves. George was required for the press of work, and seldom was of these parties. Ruth found increasing duties which absorbed her attention, and Roy and the younger sister went alone. They were daily and almost constantly companions. Attended by Luna and Bruno, there was little of interest in the neighborhood about the lake or by the river that the young girl did not become familiar with.

To Roy what days those were. They come to few men, and to the most favored but once in life. He forgot the words of his father, the pain and mortification of that night. All the old buoyancy of spirit returned with many revelations of the latent springs of life and joy in his own nature, before unknown to him.

Away from the world, its methods and customs, set free from its conventionalities, in a region and companionship where the maxims of society did not obtain, where the freedom which attends the footsteps of the maiden and all the canons invented for safety were felt to be superfluous, where circumspection is not thought of and the word propriety could never be heard, where eyes to watch and tongues to tattle did not exist, Cora was remitted to the guidance of her innate sense of what this new position permitted and required of her. As for the youth, his soul and nature were as unsure as were hers, his thoughts as virginal, his imagination as limpid. His admiration, love, devotion were as open and unasking as the sunshine, and as silent. Cora could but be natural, frank, sincere. There was no call for coyness, no need for reserve. This she unconsciously felt. She was vivacious, or grave, or thoughtful, as was her mood. To Ruth, as to Cora, the usages and demands of artificial life, and the restrictions which they impose upon the relations of a young girl with young men, had in these far off wilds, for the time, not existed. She was surprised when she reflected upon the freedom of the companionship of these two, and of her own unthinking promotion of it, for such she felt had been her wish and action, had that been necessary. She had some words with her father in reference to them. It was deemed wise to place some of the restraints of social life in the old centers upon their association. Not for Cora's protection, Ruth did full justice to the character of young Gregory, but both felt "that this boy and girl were at the least spending too much time philandering about the woods." This was the father's concluding speech. Ruth thought that Cora herself, as with her tact she could easily do, should reduce their association to something of the pattern of re-

fined social life in the country. She had no doubt that it was really precious to her sister, but its form must be changed—at least modified.

She spoke to Cora of it, tried to talk with her, but the girl merely laughed. She would have drawn from her something of her feeling toward the youth himself, and was answered: "O, I told you some time ago that I thought his beard was pretty, and now I think, generally, he is a very pretty fellow—a very pretty fellow." "He was old enough to take care of himself," and so innocent, and much more. Ruth did not like it. Cora would not understand what she wished to impress upon her, and she put it in a very unadorned way. "What do you suppose the Remings, and Earls, and Bristols and all that set would say, if they knew you were every day riding and strolling through the woods alone with Fitzroy Gregory?"

"Well, Ruth, if you want to know, you write and tell them all about it, put it as plainly as you do to me, and have the elder of the Misses Reming tell you what people say about it." That ended the conversation, as also some other things. Cora was deeply offended and struck out very effectively.

There was a pending horseback ride for the next day. Roy rode across the woods with Red Cross and the mare, and tied them in the margin of the wood. He went to the house and was met at the door by round-faced, bright-eyed Mrs. Winter. "Miss Cora asked to be excused," she said from the young lady. He looked amazed, and at first did not comprehend. He had never heard that form of speech.

"She means that she cannot go this afternoon, which she regrets, of course, and so she expects you will excuse her."

The pallor of the brown cheek became warm with color at once. "Certainly,"

with a bow—that for Mrs. W.—he turned and walked directly back to the horses, and used no unnecessary time in reaching Castle Gregory. To him this was the end of all. To become repressed is the habit which the forest imposes on the character of her children, so far as their feelings and emotions are involved. Something of this Roy had also borrowed of the natives, older pupils of this weird mother and mistress. Joy, happy thoughts he had no purpose to conceal. Yet his nature was too deep to proclaim them with shoutings. Grief, pain, anguish he carried in silence. The Judge saw that something had happened, what he did not ask, nor did the young man tell him. From the night when Roy slew the panther there was a change in the manner of the Judge toward him, characterized by much more consideration, with something of thoughtfulness, for his possible feelings. He could not bring himself to recall the painful matter of his own injustice to him, and express regret for it, or intimate that it was unkind or undeserved, much less apologize for or excuse it. What New England father could? Some compensation he intended to make him. While he had no doubt of his son's sentiment for Cora, the youth had said nothing to him of it, and had not the benefit of his experience and counsel in his affairs with the young lady. He deplored even in anguish his hasty words. He had no idea that they could have added anything to the difficulties which the young man felt to be in his way. He very naturally thought that they would deepen the interest which Cora might feel in him, and it never occurred to him that they could painfully increase the youth's sense of his own unworthiness of her, or prevent him from seeking his aid. He could have explained the usages of social life involved in the young man's suit, but nothing was said by Roy.

Something he saw, but did not feel that he could ask of it, and so remained unknowing and useless. To him it seemed that there could not be a girl in the world who would not love Roy. Then he remembered his own early moderate estimate of the youth and thought it not impossible that this one did not and might not hereafter. Had he known on that evening when Roy came home, perhaps he would have intervened, as the fathers of that day sometimes did in the affairs of their sons.

It had been a purpose of Roy to hunt that autumn, with Brady, at the west. The arrival of the Hillmans had seemingly driven it from his mind, or changed his purpose. On his return with the unriden Una, he quite electrified Peter with orders to put the needed properties and material in readiness for the expedition.

Ruth was surprised at the conduct of Cora. She expected that she would keep her engagement with Roy, of course, and treat him with some of the consideration due him. She knew that instead of seeing him, she sent Mrs. Winter to meet and turn him away. She managed to approach him, as he was about to mount, at the margin of the wood. He had once or twice spoken to her of a boating on the pond, of which she then reminded him. He was quite at her wish, and proposed the next afternoon on the lake, to which she cheerfully assented. She had a purpose, and finesse with him was unnecessary. He may have had a purpose, and to him finesse was impossible.

In the afternoon of the next day he presented himself in hunting shirt and moccasins at the Hillman house, accompanied by Luna. Ruth did not keep him waiting. He did not see or ask for Cora, nor did Ruth detect anything unusual in his manner. On their way to the pond she said: "You thought it

strange Cora did not go with you, yesterday?"

"I am trying not to think of Cora to-day," he answered.

"You are not to think ill of her, Mr. Gregory."

A look of surprise at the possibility of such a thing, was his response.

"You did not ask her why she did not go," she said.

"Had she wanted me to know she would have told me."

"There are some things a young girl cannot volunteer to say."

"There are some things a gentleman will not ask. I presume. It was enough for me that she did not go."

"Well, all young men have some things to—" she hesitated."

"Learn. I have a world of them—more than you can think of."

"I think Cora ought to have gone with you. Then, perhaps, you would have proposed to go again, and the thing would have been disposed of pleasantly."

"Ah! yes, I see. But her way was more emphatic."

Ruth looked at him, dropped her eyes in thought. It was not so easy to get on to the right plane with this primitive man. She had taken some things for granted; would continue the error.

"You see, Roy," beginning in a direct way, "you and Cora were utter strangers three weeks ago, and you became very intimate. It was natural and pleasant; you are both so young, and you are so—so—" hesitating. How could she tell him?

"Unsophisticated, aboriginal, in fact, Miss Hillman."

"Let me help myself out. It was not just the thing for you two to be alone so much in the woods and everywhere. Don't misun-

derstand. We were not in the least afraid to entrust her to you; it was not that, and she did not like to refuse to go, of course."

"Till she had arranged to go. It is all right. A word from any of you would have spared her the words of yesterday. It cannot be very pleasant for you to say this to me to-day. I am very sorry." He could not apprehend the light in which she saw it.

"Roy, you don't understand what I mean—what I wish and want to say."

"I will have no wishes but yours, when I know them, and I do now, I am sure."

"Let me tell you, and believe every word I say. You are not to avoid us; not to avoid Cora. You are brave and generous to a fault. We like you, admire you, trust you. You are to come to us. Let us see you, and treat Cora as you always have. Think of her as you may wish to, you will not ask her to go away alone with you, nor can any of us very often go with you. Don't misunderstand, nor feel hurt. There is no hurt intended, nor that you should for one instant be unhappy, if you understand."

"Well, if a pachyderm could not understand you he should at once be knocked on the head, Miss Hillman."

"What do you understand, Roy?"

"Please, please Miss Hillman. You agree with my father, I see," a good deal hurt. "On that night I walked these woods and proffered myself as prey for the most cowardly brutes that skulk from daylight. The meanest of them would have found me unresisting."

"Oh, Roy, Roy! For the love of heaven! You will break my heart."

"Forgive me, if you can. Even I think less of myself. Yet I am sure I have the rudiments of the heart and brain of a man."

They were standing on the sands when these last sentences were uttered, and Roy

delivered them with an air of superb scorn. Distressed as she was, Ruth wished that Cora was present to see and hear him. She offered no reply. She saw they had all been somewhat mistaken in him, and the uselessness of further explanation.

He stood for a moment and drew in his breath, when his manner changed. "You mean me only good, I know and feel that. Let me love you. If I had a tall, noble sister, she should be like you. I don't yet know how unfortunate I have been here in the woods. I don't pity myself, nor shall any one pity me."

"I will be your true sister and friend," said Ruth, much moved. "Only trust me."

"I do, and I came to give you a row. See! here is my boat, never so arrayed before," calling her attention to it.

It was the largest boat, with a splendid robe of gray wolf skins spread tastefully over the seat at the stern. The bow and gunwale were wreathed with the running ground pine, interspersed with bunches of scarlet berries. Luna was of the party, and when they had embarked Roy sent the craft into the lake, first pointing to an eagle's nest in the dead top of an old chestnut tree on the high land below the pond, and directed Ruth to hold for that. Then he sent the little craft lightly on her way. At the bend in the lower part of the lake he told her to change the course, and relaxing his efforts as the surface began to draw into the outlet, he permitted the vessel to drift with the slow incipient current. Avoiding the channel, he sent her about and coasted along up the eastern shore, engaged in a playful conversation with Ruth, to whom he had seldom shown himself to better advantage. "He holds himself in perfect control," was her mental comment as she yielded to the charm of his voice and manner.

He pulled around to a place on the western shore, where the waters of a spring made

their way into those of the lake by a stream five or six yards long, forming a little dell in the high bank, from which the spring made out. Into this small stream the bow of the boat was thrust, and the voyagers landed. The place was new to Ruth, and Roy pointed out the easily-distinguished marks of a long-deserted Indian camp, and the still visible hollow of a once well-worn path up over the bank leading to the river. Then the bow was turned back to the place of embarkation where, landing, they returned to Ruth's home.

On the way through the lush and ripened growths, the young man gathered some berries as he went, which he grouped in the form of a bouquet, not unlike the one he presented to Ruth, though composed of different varieties. A scarlet head of ginseng was the center, with Solomon seals, blue and white wax berries, and others carelessly arranged with ferns, green and white, in a way to produce a pleasing effect. They met Cora on the now finished veranda, to whom he gave them in his usual unimpressive way of doing such things. She received them with effusive gratitude, her face taking and losing color very prettily. Roy met her as if they had parted pleasantly an hour before.

"I thought you might wish to see the seeds and fruit of the buds and flowers you once admired," he said, with just a flavor of irony.

"Oh yes, I am. Of course they are the same—with slight changes."

"Well, you see, buds and flowers are disappointing, sometimes."

"O, they are? How you must have suffered! Now I am really charmed with the come out of mine. I never saw anything more beautiful."

He had turned to caress Bruno, and made her no reply. He had a half-minute's con-

versation with the dog, whose answers he affected to repeat, and gave renewed injunctions of fidelity to him. Then he asked for George, who was away from the house.

"Tell him I shall leave both boats at his landing. I wish he would look after them a little."

Then with leave, a little formal, he walked away from the sisters, the elder of whom had not spoken since her return from the pond. She stood looking after him till his person was hidden by the trees. Tears were slowly gathering in her eyes. Cora saw them, stepped to her and passed an arm tenderly about her waist.

"Who are they for, yourself or for him?" with a gesture toward the forest, where Roy disappeared.

"Had you been on the sands an hour ago you would have received some new impressions of him; you would then understand why, unarmed, he could face angry wild beasts, Cora."

"Tell me all about it, everything that you both said."

"To-night when we are by ourselves and have plenty of time."

At the pond Roy drew the boats out of the water and turned them up, so that they would not catch water, placing a small parcel under the larger, so that it might attract attention. Then with the wolf robe over his arm, without reference to trails, he took the most direct way home.

After tea, with his unlit cigar and a paper match in his hand, the Judge turned to his son: "You have been over to take leave of the Hillmans?"

"I took leave."

"French leave?"

"Well, a little Gallic."

"More Gallic than Frankish. You told them you were going?"

"They saw me go."

"O! anything about Sandusky?"

"Why should I? Beside I did not want to let them know that they were to have the relief of my absence. They will enjoy it with suspense now, for a day or two."

"In the world, a gentleman who had been as intimate as you were there, would have mentioned an intended journey, perhaps."

"Perhaps so, and perhaps I had better tell you of a little thing. I wish you to do something and say something."

"Something having reference to Cora?"

"I had an engagement to ride with her to the Island yesterday. She did not go."

"The deuce! Why?"

"She did not say."

"Did you ask her?"

"Certainly not; and I never intend to."

"Pretty sharp, pretty sharp—for a boy." Approvingly.

"I have been on the pond with Ruth to-day—an old promise on my part. She made the explanation, 'It was not the thing.'"

"What was not the thing?"

"Cora going with me."

"Are you certain, Roy?"

"Ruth went over and over with it, shooting it into me almost, and then she asked me if I understood it."

"The deuce she did! Well?"

"I ventured to think I did."

"Well?"

"Then she told me what a brave—and of course weak, youth I was, how they all liked me, and I must like them all, including Cora, and be their friend as they were mine—everything to go on just as it had, except I was not to ask Cora to go with me any more."

"The devil!" which very strong form of speech showed the Judge was excited greatly. Roy had never heard it more than twice before.

"It was all just as it is in the books he said. 'It is not the thing,' but the young chap and the lady's family are to be sworn friends forever, because it is not. That is the formal way of disposing of a fellow, I take it."

"So they interfered and forbade her going?" musingly.

"No. Ruth said Cora ought to have gone."

"So she did not want to go? Had you filed your declaration, as the lawyers call it? Made open proffer of love?"

"Not a word. I knew better. I did not suppose she loved me."

"Well, this seems to have been a family arrangement; and I must say that I think these Boston folk play pretty fast, but they probably were willing to save you the pain of a refusal. It was very kind if that was it. So, so, Miss Cora, so, so—that is it, is it?" musing with his chin in his hand, and looking into the fire.

"Now, father, I have never said a word to them of Brady, and to announce my sudden departure—how would that sound down country?"

"O, it would not be the thing at all. You saw Cora this afternoon. Did she say anything about—about yesterday?"

"Not a word. She was as sweet as on that first day here. Now, you must go and call on them just as if nothing had happened. Do all they will let you for them, and more and better. Do as you would if that *was* the thing. You will know how and what. Have them over here. It is about time. If they ask about me, why I said nothing, tell them it is my way. That I learned it of the Indians. When the time comes I go. They don't expect me to act like civilized white folk, and, father, never mention me to them, I implore."

"Well, Roy, this has been a short dream for both of us."

"Yes, but a boy who has speared bears—well," recollecting himself, "may escape a young lady with his life, perhaps," smiling.

"You are hurt now and angry. The worst is, to come. You shall go East in the spring—to Europe if you wish. You need it greatly, Roy."

"Well, in the meantime I shall be back in three weeks; shall bring lots of things, hunt with George, and treat Cora as I do the rest of them when I do come."

"Perhaps she has a lover East. I never thought of that. Perhaps—"

"Perhaps a dozen things. Perhaps go to the dogs! I am not to be driven out of these woods by a girl, nor go pining 'round in them."

"Give me your hand, my son," starting up with both hands extended. "By George, Roy, I am only just beginning to find you out."

"I have only begun to find myself out," putting his hands in his father's. "There is a good deal to learn and the school not pleasant," he added.

"Roy, I am sorry you are going off into the woods so far. This last thing has shaken me up a good deal. Now do be careful. You are nearer to me day by day. If anything should happen"—and there stopped.

"You say I am to suffer heartache."

"You love her?"

"I could die for her, now."

"Yes, it is in you," sadly.

"Don't be cast down, father. I shall come back to you, only stronger and better, and I mean to grow wiser sometime." And then they parted.

Ere the Judge was moving in the morning, Roy, with a man to help him, went on board his loaded boat, and with Leo as passenger, committed himself to the swollen river. The boat would be left at Cleveland. A small sloop would carry him up the lake.

CHAPTER VI.

CORA HAS AN INTERVIEW WITH THE OLD BORDER WOMAN OF THE CASTLE AND OFFERS TRIBUTE.

There was a long talk between the sisters the night after the boat excursion. Ruth was grave, earnest, and tender. She related the incidents of it, and what was said at length. Cora said little, and what she said was unsatisfactory. After each of several responses of hers, Ruth said: "Cora, I wish I could see your face."

"Well, get up and light a candle and take a good look at it, if you can't wait for daylight."

Ruth summed up the pond interview. "Well, this is the impression made on him. You don't care for him, and we should not approve of it if you did; and that we wish him to remain good friends to us all."

"Well, is not that satisfactory?"

"If it is to you."

"That is just as I would have it. What can I want of a lover here in the woods, or anywhere? and such a lover—if he is one."

"You seem to have got on very well with him, Cora."

"Stuff! Stuff and nonsense! Oh," thrusting a corner of the sheet into her own mouth; "I won't hear you any more," she said a moment later, and turned her face from her sister.

Ruth composed herself to sleep, and waking later, discovered that Cora was weeping very softly and quietly. She placed an arm over the slender waist, and drew the yielding form to her.

"I—I tried to go to sleep without saying my prayer," the girl managed to say in excuse. A warning to maidens to be devout.

"No wonder; you determined not to pray for Roy, who has no mother or sister to pray for him."

Whatever course her devotions took, restful slumber came to her. It was a busy time with the Hillmans, the new cabin for the young wife had to be finished, and where the land was reclaimed wheat was to be sown. The fires were busy with the brush and new growths, while many decaying trunks of the first forest remained to be consumed. George was too constantly employed with the burning to find time for fish-rods and guns. He was looking forward for the first hunting snows, and pursuit of deer. Toward evening of the day of Roy's departure, he ran down to the pond and was surprised to find the boats drawn out of the water, and disposed in a way showing that the owner did not expect to use them immediately. He discovered a parcel under the larger, which contained a folded paper. He found it to be a note to him from Roy Gregory, dated of the day before.

"Dear George: I leave the boats for you. If you want ammunition or anything, go to Peter. He has orders to do for you anything you may wish.

"I am off in the morning. Shall be back in time for the snow—I hope. Leo goes with me.

"Later, the deer will come into your clearing very early in the morning to feed. Look out for them.

"Father will call in a day or two. Yours,
"Roy."

The note produced much surprise in the Hillman household.

"It is strange," said Ruth, "He might have told me."

"His sister," added Cora archly.

"I am as much his sister as I expect ever to be." Ruth said a little decidedly, and to draw attention from it—"He took Leo."

"He will be back when the snow comes," George said.

"He has gone on his hunt," said the unmoved Cora.

"Did he ever tell you about it?" asked Ruth.

"No. I only inferred it from what Peter, the chronicler, said one day, that he was afraid he had given up the Sandusky hunt."

"It was very suddenly taken up again, it seems," was Ruth's comment.

"It is not his way to say anything of himself or his plans. It may have been suddenly taken up again," Cora said within difference.

"He should have told you yesterday that he was going, to see how bad you would feel," said Ruth.

"I presume he would were he a common man," was Cora's response.

"O, so you admit he is an uncommon man?"

"All men are uncommon here, Ruth. I am sure I have praised him to his father, to you, and to every one. I think he is the bravest man, and one of the most generous. Why do you bring these things up to me now?"

"Well, to see if you had changed your mind?"

"I should hardly have thought his father would let him go away off there among bears and panthers. I wonder he did not take Bruno to guard his camp," was Cora's reply.

"He gave him to keep guard over you. You remember his talk with him yesterday," was Ruth's remark.

"I never saw such a girl as Cora is. A man may give her everything, do everything for her, and she don't seem to care," said George, disgusted.

"Why, George, the pleasure of giving and doing on his part was as great as it was to me to have him give and do. Does he complain of my ingratitude?"

"He complain! You have done something to him, I'll bet."

"You ask him when he comes back all about it," coolly.

"I'll ask old Peter," said the youth. "I won't wait."

"Yes, I would. Of course he told Peter. That would be like him, George."

"Peter knows without tellin'," George answered, sulkily.

"Some of us must take your grammar and pronunciation in hand, George, or there will be no 'tellin' where they will land you," said Cora, laughing.

"Wa'l, as long as I do all right, tell no lies, and don't fool nobody, I'll risk it," was his assured reply.

"Wa'l, those are good points. Still you might be more particular, George."

"Who's goin' to hear me herein the woods, I'd like to know?"

"We do, and Roy will when he returns. You pick this up from the Winters," was Cora's answer.

"Wa'l, Will Roy is a gentleman born."

"And so are you, George," added Ruth, "you should remember that."

"I see," said Cora, who held the note in her hand, "that the Judge will call. I know we shall all be glad to see him."

"Yes, you remember papa partly promised him that we would all go over there again after a month," said Ruth. "He may remind us of it."

"O, that will be splendid," cried Cora.

"Yes, you'll be ready enough to go," added George to her.

"And you will not want to, I presume," was her response.

The Judge did not call on that day, nor the next. Ruth thought it strange. Cora was silent as to her thoughts on the subject. On Saturday afternoon he rode out of the woods, and tied his horse near the stable, and made his way to where the men were at work on the new ground, which he examined as he

went. He informed Mr. Hillman that there was a plenty of lumber now at the saw mill; also that they were to have a new neighbor. A Mr. Ward had purchased land, and would at once put up buildings on the Cleveland road. Ward would be followed by others in the winter and spring. He reminded Mr. Hillman that it was quite a month since his former visit to the castle, and that preparations would be made for them all the next day, and was referred to Ruth for final answer.

Cora was at the spring below the house. As the Judge turned toward it she met him, never, as the Judge thought, looking so entirely lovely as when in the sweet frankness which characterized all her intercourse with the Judge. She met him and passed her hand within his arm. He was charmed, but wary. He talked in the pleasant way which he could command when he chose, and always employed toward her.

"You don't tell me a word of Fitzroy, Judge, though you know I want to have you," said Cora very prettily, as the Judge thought.

"O, you do! Well, what shall I say about him?"

"Why, he went away quite suddenly, Ruth and I think."

"Bless you, so he did! Of course he told you?"

"Not a word, although he parted with Ruth and myself here the night before he went."

"That needs explanation."

"It may have been our fault—my fault," dropping her eyes.

"Your fault! your fault! You never had one—not one."

"O, I have a great many, you can see, Mr. Gregory, kind as you are."

The pleased Judge looked her over with care. "I don't see a single fault, not a sign of one, I declare!" quite decisively.

"Did he want you to say or do anything—anything unusual?"

"He wanted I should come over here and do what I could for you all, of course."

"And you are both so kind," a little disappointed.

"Had he a mother or sister he would talk of you to her."

"O, I did not know but that he mentioned something."

The Judge was curious. He would not ask questions. "You may have boxed his ears for something, and then think he ought to have been excused as not knowing?"

The girl remained silent.

"So he went without leave taking?"

"Yes, but it was no offense to us."

"You see he has lived here in the woods with the Indians. When the time comes for an Indian he steals off without a word."

"Is that the way?"

"Yes."

Her response was a look. They had turned and walked up the bank toward the house, and paused on the level ground.

"He has been so good, and went away so unexpectedly," she said, when they had gained the point where they paused, not satisfied with what he said.

"And went somewhat under a cloud, I fancied," added the Judge.

"O, did he tell you what—what was it?" eagerly.

"Nothing that happened at his own home, I am glad to say."

"Do you suppose that something happened here, and so he did not tell?"

"If anything had happened here, you would not like to have had him flare up and threaten to run off into the woods, would you?"

"No, of course, I would not," not quite understanding the question.

"Then he would not tell you he was going?"

"Not unless he had intended it for some time, as I think he had."

"Yes, he had intended to go to the Sandusky Bay and hunt with Brady. I had heard nothing of it for sometime, till he came home the night before he went."

They had now reached the house and met Ruth. The Judge was invited in and remained to supper. Here the arrangement to visit the Judge the day ensuing was made, and he took leave. Cora went with him to his horse, and stood looking after him as he rode into the wood. The Judge wondered as he went at the perverse taste of the young man who preferred the hardship, exposure, and danger of hunting bears to remaining in a neighborhood "where dwell such maidens rare."

The next was a delicious autumn day, full of the warm sensuousness which makes a luxury of mere being. The Hillmans, father and daughters, formed the party that went to Castle Gregory. George did not care to go. He persisted that the world had conspired to banish Roy, and he wouldn't go to Castle Gregory in his absence. He would go to the pond, and help the boys, as he called the Winters, tend the fire on the new land which would burn on Sunday. There was the smoky haze of the Indian summer, brooding creamily over the broad fields of the Gregorys, as the little party emerged from the forest and entered the domain.

"It never looked so lovely, I am sure," said Ruth.

"Nor so lonely," said Cora unconscious of the inspiration to this utterance.

Nothing could surpass the kindness of the Judge's reception. He ventured to remind Cora of her resemblance in form to the one he had lost, as he took her from the gentle Una, sent over for her use as the custom was.

They had a season of worship. Ruth read a sermon and Mr. Hillman made such touching reference to the absent Roy, in his prayer, that Mr. Gregory shed tears. Then the girls went and found the fawn, and walked about the grounds. Old Peter joined them and told of Roy's voyage down the river, and generally of Roy's going away. "Twas kindersuddint, es zif suthin'd 'appened," with his eyes on Cora. "Es zif suthin'd 'appened," he repeated.

"What could it have been, do you suppose?" asked Cora, looking him innocently in the eyes.

"I dun'no, Miss.

"If I knew I would tell you, Mr. Peter," she said very prettily.

Now, Peter was an immense admirer of Cora's, and the puzzled look which his old face now wore indicated that he suspected that she had something to do with the young man's departure after all. He studied the baffling problem, and said, "I'm glad 'e went enny way."

"I am sorry, Peter," responded Cora, with absolute sincerity, which speech did not greatly help Peter's solution of his problem. He hoped to have something to tell. Everything was in the region of metaphysics, a word Peter had never heard.

The cook and sole mistress of the castle was Auntie Smith, whose family and kin had always sojourned on or beyond the border, northwestern Virginia and western Pennsylvania. She knew only their ways and life. The women were all famous cooks, with few methods and limited powers. She was secured by the Judge when he first entered upon his life on his new domain, and had always had his confidence and protection. She saw Cora on her first visit at Castle Gregory, and greatly admired her. Once since, she furnished refreshments to a little picnic party—the sisters, accompanied by Roy and

George—on the river. Cora then expressed a wish to see her kitchen, and was invited to do so. When the girls went in to-day, she made her way to Auntie's domain. She found her in one corner of a huge stone-jambed fireplace, in which swung a stout iron crane, on which were suspended a dozen or more iron crane hooks, of all lengths. There was a spit, and baking pans, with a good supply of the implements in use at that time, long since obsolete.

The tall, thin, plain women received her visitor with kindness, and pointed out her properties and their uses. She was surprised to find how much Cora seemed to know of her art, and the intelligence with which she heard her explanations. She was engaged on a dinner of small game, squirrels, partridges, and ducks, and she showed the apt girl her methods with each.

She took occasion to say to Cora, "I hope ye likes over 'ere?"

"It is a beautiful place, certainly nothing surrounded by woods can be more lovely."

"It sartin is, Miss."

"It seems lonesome to-day," added the visitor.

"Ye sees it too? It's allus so, wen 'e's gone. From the Major to the chickens, the dogs, and 'osses, all knows w'en 'e's gone."

Cora offered to make some biscuit, such as the Judge praised at the Hillman supper table, which were beyond the powers of the cook of Castle Gregory. Auntie produced the kneading bowl and flour with such other things as Cora called for. Then the girl unbuttoned and removed the frills from her wrists, took two or three rings from her fingers, and turned her sleeves above her elbows, exposing to the wondering eyes of Auntie Smith arms such as she had never seen. Reared as were her mother and grandmother, mid the hardships and labors of the border, tramping through the woods, using

the ax and rifle, doing the work, and carrying the burdens of men, their forms came to partake much of the hardness and meagerness of the other sex. When her eyes rested on the rounded and symmetrical limbs, she uttered an exclamation of wonder. "For the mercy sake," and gently laying a finger of one of her own bony hands on the polished surface as white as the flour she was to mold, and lifting the dainty dimpled hand in the other, she stood in silence till a new idea occurred to her, and dropping the hand she stepped back and said: "You's that way all over. You's a different sort from us, Miss Cora."

"Do you think, Auntie?" laughing.

Many of the daughters of the oldest Boston families of that time were familiar with household duties, and often made dishes for the table. Cora was one of them, and went about her enterprise with a readiness and deftness which charmed the appreciative spectator. While thus engaged Auntie Smith electrified her with her conversation.

"W'en we fust seed ye a ridin' on that Una mare, an' 'im by yer side, we's mose sartin we seed the one that's ter come some time. We all thought so. An' the Major's sot 'is 'art on't." The kitchen fire was very warm—this was much warmer. Cora thought she would have to retreat, as the color in her cheeks did not.

"Mebby," the old woman resumed, "there's some one 'down country' is a cummin' fer ye. I'm sartin all the young men as sees ye'll want ye."

"O, that 'down country' is full of pretty girls, auntie."

"It's not many so purty 's you I know," shaking her head. "We should be 'appy 's burds. I wonder 'ow ye'd like it?"

Cora burst into a peal of laughter so irresistible that Auntie Smith was compelled

to join in it, which she did in a silent, subterranean way.

"O, Auntie Smith! You dear, funny old Auntie! I must make you a cap, you are so funny; you would look well in a cap."

"I axes yer parding," looking abashed and a little bewildered.

"You have not offended me in the least. Let me tell you—one of our 'down country' girls could never think of such a thing—never."

The poor old thing was dismayed. "Ise raised in the woods, ye see," she said, depreciatingly.

"O, it is not that at all; it does not make much difference where such a man is reared," she said, a little warmly.

"I'm glad o' that," brightening.

"You see, Auntie, the young man, whoever he is, must think of this thing first, and find out what he wants, and then when he is certain, he tells the young woman what he wishes, and gives her plenty of time to think over and make up her mind. She will want to know all about him; how much he loves her, and whether she loves him—understand?"

"Yis, yis, I see;" struck with the luminous statement of the proper conditions. "Uv course thar'll be plenty o' time, only I am feard o' some o' them down country chaps," was the old woman's answer. Cora could not help laughing, and said: "Auntie, if you won't say anything more of this to me, nor to anyone, I will bring you two lovely caps; and if any of those 'down country chaps' do come, I will let you know in time. They shall not get me so easily."

The old woman thought it over, grimly, for a little space and then said—"Wal."

Meantime the flour had received the required ingredients, was wrought into dough of the pattern consistency, and fashioned into small flattened globes, and placed in a

large baking pan, which was set on a bed of coals, the cover placed over them, and coals deposited on the cover made to receive and hold them.

Cora aided the wild-eyed, shy girl of the dining-room to array the table—she quite took that in hand. She arranged lovely bouquets of autumn flowers, leaves, and ferns for it, and then supervised the disposition of the viands, which had to be placed on the table in advance of the guests.

When the Judge led Ruth in, followed by her father, he paused, struck by the tasty, almost elegant, appearance which met his appreciative eyes.

"O, I see, I see," glancing from the work of her hand to her dimpling face. "I wondered where you were, and now wonder at what you were doing." And later, when he pulled open one of the fragrant snowy biscuit—"It is warm and was made here!"

"You were kind to those you ate last evening, Judge Gregory," she modestly suggested.

"They are the bread of paradise! If we could always have it here—day by day our daily bread," said the Judge.

"The maiden of the forest renders tribute at the castle in white bread at the pleasure of its lord," said the smiling girl from her seat at the table.

"It shall be a treaty, a compact, solemnly ratified, and at least paid monthly; shall that be added?"

"If it so pleases the castle's chief."

It was a very pleasant day, and it was apparent to Ruth that Cora intended to remove from the Judge's mind any unpleasant impression he may have received in reference to her part of any transaction between Roy and herself.

When the guests were ready to depart, the Judge rode by the young girl's side through

the woods, and reached his own home in a very pleasant frame of mind afterward.

Ruth was notified by the face of her sister that there was something funny in reserve, which, in her own time, would be communicated—would ripple itself out, if the child was not teased about it. In due time it did. Of course it was the interview with Auntie Smith, and Ruth thought rather well of the old woman's part of it, and that Cora managed it very sensibly. And she looked up two of their late mother's caps, which the girls changed at discretion for the kind-hearted old woman.

"The other side of it will be: they will ask her how she came by the caps, and she will tell Peter the story, and I don't care if she does."

"And I rather hope she will," added Ruth.

"You are almost unkind to me lately, Ruth," said the girl.

"You don't confide in me, Cora."

"I don't know what I have to confide to you. I may not confide in myself." Then she went and kissed her sister tenderly.

"I must say one thing, Cora, you never were so entirely your best self as to-day; no acting, except your natural self."

"Do I ever act, Ruth?"

"We all act a little. Recall your part of any little scene, and see."

"Perhaps I do. I never thought of it before," looking grave.

On his next visit to Castle Gregory George bore Cora's offering to the appreciative Auntie Smith. The poor thing wanted to know how they were to be worn, and under the waggish instruction of the messenger, the simple creature presented herself to Cora, afterwards, with one on hind side before. The young lady gravely assured her that the late Mrs. Hillmau wore them the other way, but it made very little difference; which was true.

The Indian summer ran riot in the riches of the forest. The leaves ripened and fell, giving their fruity aroma to the atmosphere. The chestnuts and acorns, the world of beech-nuts and hickory nuts, under the frosts, rains, and winds, strewn and mingled with the leaves, made constant festival for the as yet undiminished denizens of the woods. The mother bear led her two stout cubs abroad in the day time, wolves began to gather in gangs under their leaders for the winter's hunts; the deer united in herds, the bucks with their new antlers grown and hardened for the duties of defensive war. The forest was still traversed by considerable droves of elk, and furnished cover for innumerable of the small animals. Flocks of turkeys spread themselves through the chestnut ridges, and the sky was darkened by the clouds of the passenger pigeon. Already the tender green of the young wheat was spreading its sheen over the fire blackened ground under the watchful eyes of Ruth and Cora, who could now from the margin of their clearing catch gleams of the pond through haked trees. How empty the forest had become, the scarlet fruit of the fever-bush, and the crimson berries of the useless dogwood, like light flames, were distinguishable at great distances. What a marvelous change a week wrought in the aspect of the woods.

October ran into November, the smoky atmosphere deepened, and the days darkened. The warm southwest wind with its moan became a tempest with wails, and shrieks, and fierce rain. The wind swept around to the northwest, the rain changed to mad, whirling, drifting snow. The bears sought their dens, the wolves their lairs, and the deer their covers in the thickets and under protecting banks. Huge wedges of water fowl had been passing from the lake and the farther North, for two or three days, sending their

trumpet notes of warning down through all the lonely woods.

The first day of snow terminating suddenly the season of warmth, was a day of surprise and anxiety to the new household in the woods, accustomed as its members were to the rigors of the New England climate. From mid forenoon till after nightfall the blinding snow came in mad drifts and swards over and through the trees, as if it would fill the little clearing to the surrounding fence top. The forest protected it from the flurry of the wind, to which many of the stoutest trees were compelled to yield, and the snow fell in comparative quiet within its charmed circle. All the dark day it fell thick and accumulated rapidly. In the early night the storm subsided, the dark, vapory clouds drifted away, the half moon fell among the restored tree-tops, and the stars came out, one after another, on the receding margin of the fleeing clouds.

It was a day of some excitement at the Hillman's. The snow came, as it always does in the country, to find them unprepared. It demonstrated the inefficiency of the roof on the winter cabin in a snow storm.

As they stood looking out over the white surface, after the subsidence of the snow, and marked its almost luminous gleam, where the dark columns of the trees rose gloomily from it, they were surprised at the distance which vision could reach in the forest depths. Then there came to their ears, as if from the very margin of the wood, a startling, loud, melancholy, many-voiced concert of a full band of wolves, brute wailings, long-drawn, unearthly, fearful, and with a certain musical wildness. How near the savage vocalists must be. How they filled all the outer world, and swelling into the arch of the sky, thrilled along the nerves, bringing a nameless dread even to the safe listener. Though this was the first time that any of the household

heard a note, they at once knew those were the voices of wolves, the most artful, ferocious, and, in large bands, the most dangerous prowlers of the wilderness.

Long and continuously, without pause or break, sounding every note of the vulpine gamut mingled and involved, each rolling into and through the others, the tide swelled out and rolled on. Certainly they must be just in the edge of the wood at the northwest, and more than one of the startled inmates of the cabins believed they could see their shadowy forms. Unaware of their numbers and habits, the males put themselves in the attitude of defense. The two guns furnished by Roy for George's use, axes, and other implements were placed in readiness, and preparations to barricade doors and windows were made. The hovel was closed and watch kept. Bruno, upon whom much reliance was justly placed, was the least excited member of the garrison. He pricked up his ears, looked toward the wood, snuffed the air, and noted the things taking place about him. Finally, as the wild uproar in the wood showed no decline, and the excitement about him was at its zenith, the noble old mastiff stalked through the snow up under the trees in the direction of the wolves, leaped the fence, and raised his own deep-chested, loud, far-reaching, defiant bark, which pealed off under the arches of the old wood, and helped the Hillmans and Winters to a better idea of the distance between themselves and their enemies. At first they supposed the howling was a preliminary flourish preparatory of attack. As none was made, they were divided in opinion as to its purpose. When Bruno sounded his defiance, they expected he would be attacked, and the armed party followed him to the wood to aid him in that event. They recalled Fitzroy's rescue of Old Peter, and remembered that Bruno was his only ally in that battle. The

supporting party halted at the rude fence, where, after having sounded his challenge according to his notions of what the occasion required, the mastiff joined them apparently pleased at their prompt action. The result of the demonstration may have been what the old warrior possibly expected, for very soon the howling grew faint, as if receding in distance, or diminishing in strength and volume. It entirely ceased ere the party accompanied by Bruno returned to their homes. They supposed that the band was intimidated by Bruno, which added greatly to the high consideration which he before received. As the household assembled around the blazing fire the absent hunter was freely talked of, and the unanimous wish for his speedy return expressed, as was concern for his safety, on account of his prolonged absence and the severity of the storm of that day. It was never before so clearly comprehended how much his presence was to the Hillmans, and Cora did not permit George to surpass her in the strength and favor of declared wishes for his return.

Sam Winter and his wife spent the night in their new cabin alone. They had a lively fire burning. The young wife by the side of her sleeping husband was wakeful and restless. The excitement of the evening made her fearful and nervous. Her mind was filled with unpleasant impressions, and her ears on the alert for outside noises. She was finally subsiding to repose when she caught an unusual note from Bruno, an eager, pleased whining, and then she heard him get out of his kennel and run across the veranda. She also caught an answering note, as from another dog, and then a human voice, which started her up. She instantly awoke her husband, and as the voice came again, she cried eagerly, "Oh, it is Roy Gregory! He has got back. Something has happened. Let us get up." Then came a tap at the one.

small window. Sam undid the fastening of the door. It was Roy.

"I found the hovel closed up, I saw a light at your window. I did not feel quite like tramping further in the snow to-night," he said.

"No, by George! Come in, come in."

"Come in, Mr. Gregory," in the musical ringing voice of the young wife.

He stood on the threshold. Her white drapery and position sitting in the bed informed him that they had retired. Her invitation drove him back, though Sam repeated it.

"No, no, that is where your wife sleeps," horrified at the idea of intrusion.

"If you don't want I should go out, you will come in, Mr. Gregory. Sam won't let me hurt you," brave in her husband's presence.

"O I can't, I can't. It would be wrong." His virgin notions of the sanctity that must surround nuptial repose awakened a cruel wound.

Sam had taken him by the hand, and now drawn him in, and closed the door, as the abashed youth closed his last speech.

"I came from Cleveland to-day, I was feeling poorly when I started. The storm was bad, I became exhausted; we thought of making a bed in the leaves," he said, in explanation of his appearance.

"Oh, is there somebody with you?"

"Only Leo."

"Oh, it was him I heard," said Mrs. Ward.

"Leo! Leo! Call 'im in, Sam."

"He'll manage with Bruno," said his master, but he heard the woman's voice, and stood timidly waiting to enter. As the door was opened he stole to Roy's side by the fire.

"You came from the woods, where the hideous wolves have been howling; I never was so scart," said the wife.

"So you heard them?" from his seat.

"They were right on us," said the husband.

"Only just in the edge of the woods," Mrs. Winter declared, who in the refuge of her dress came forward in her bare feet.

"Perhaps I drew them away," Roy remarked.

"Did you see them?" the woman asked.

"Several of them. They were near enough to let us hear them growl and snap their teeth together. Leo is not a wolf hunter, and don't like them," speaking languidly.

"What did you do?" demanded Sam, much excited.

"Kept on as well as I could."

"I should have clim a tree."

"Never do that unless surrounded. They are cowards, till they meet a coward."

"Were you armed?"

"I had my hatchet and knife."

"You must be hungry," said the woman.

"No, I am very tired, and could drink a river."

"Sam and I will go and wake them in the other house. How glad they will all be. They all talked of you the last thing to-night, and were so afraid something had happened to you." She had gained the door leading through the common wall; one end of the older cabin; when he started up almost in alarm, "No, no, I beg of you. Just a place here by the fire—only it seems wrong," he said.

"We can find a place in there, and you take our bed," said the considerate woman.

"It will be awkward for you for me to remain here."

"Law, not a bit. You mind it twice as much as I shall."

Sam had given him a pitcher of water and his wife her pillow, saying; "I think Sam'll let me have part of his," she brought him a blanket also.

"It seems so darned poor and mean," said Sam.

Oh, I'm a hunter, have lain on the bare ground without a fire one hundred times, with no blanket more than a cloud. I should have found a place in the hovel to-night if I could have got in. It was too slow working up the river with a heavy boat, and so I walked."

"Only let me make you something warm," urged the tender woman.

"Oh, the fire is warm enough. I've been chilled and hot by turns all the afternoon."

He removed his cap as he entered, showing his tangled hair, wet. He now put by his reeking moccasins which he wore without socks.

He refused all further attention, and the young pair returned to their bed, the tender woman greatly disturbed by his haggard look and languid manner. He composed himself on the rude floor, with his feet to the fire, and Leo came and laid himself by his side, with his head near the youth's feet, and at once lapsed to sleep. Not restful was the night to be to the hunter. Drenched with melted snow, exhausted by unwonted fatigue and incipient illness which disabled him for the journey, he had borne up and pushed forward. Nothing except utter prostration induced him to seek the Hillman house. Two or three times his senses had wandered, and he instinctively felt that he could not reach home that night. Fever was in his veins, and the watchful wife noted his restlessness and heard him murmur in his unnatural sleep when she was by his side, as more than once, in her anxiety, she stole to him. Two or three times he arose and drank from the pitcher. At the approach of dawn the worried girl stole through the door into the other house to announce the presence and her fears of the condition of her guest. She greatly blamed herself for not doing it on his arrival. He was asleep as she passed by him. His face seemed flushed and the betraying lips gave words to the sleeping vision.

"What is it, Letitia," asked the wakeful Ruth, as she approached the couch of the sisters.

"Roy Gregory, O!" now breaking down in a sob.

"Roy Gregory," cried Cora in alarm, starting from her sleep at the name,—"What of him?"

"He is lying on our floor, asleep an' sick."

"On your floor?" cried Ruth, who had already left the bed.

"How came he there?"

"He came through the wolves and snow all the way from Cleveland, he couldn't go no further. Sam was asleep an' I heard him speak to Bruno. He had tried to get in to the hovel."

"Why did you not come to us?" asked Ruth, now in a dress.

"He wouldn't let me. Him and Leo has lain on the floor all night, an' are there now, an' I wouldn't wait no longer."

"O dear, how pitiful!" cried Cora, yet not quite certain what dress she would appear in to him.

"He would just lay there an' have nothin' but cold water, an' groaning an' talking in his sleep. I could not help hearing him, Cora.

Ruth hurried to the Winters' cabin.

"Lie down here, Letta, and tell me all about it," making room for her at her side, said Cora.

She did so, and there was a half minute's murmur of her voice, more indistinct at a yard's distance than that of the young hunter in his sleep.

"O, Lettie! you certainly are mistaken," was Cora's comment upon her story.

She repeated it with asseverations.

"Lettie, have you told Sam?"

"No, not a word."

"No? Please don't, nor to any mortal. The poor young man. His words so spoken are sacred. What does it mean?"

"An' him crazy," was the consoling comment. "What do you 'spose made 'im?"

"Exposure and perhaps a cold. Don't you say he is crazy. People talk in their sleep of what is much in their minds when they are awake." I do not think that is so, but Cora did.

Ruth reached the apartment of the Winters, pushed the door gently open. Sam Winter, in oblivious sleep, was its sole occupant.

She turned back, aroused her own household, and sent Mrs. Winter to awaken her husband. Upon going out they found the young man's track, with that of Leo, leading in the direction of Castle Gregory, without reference to trails and marked routes, which they followed far enough to be satisfied that he was fully equal to the journey.

On their return, it was decided that George Hillman should go at once to the Gregory mansion, to make certain of his condition, and he was soon on the way following on the track of the young hunter.

CHAPTER VII.

ROY DRAWS A LINE AND SEVERAL INFERENCES.

Exhausted, ill, the youth sank to rest upon the floor. It seemed to him almost a miracle—this young girl by the side of her wedded lover in innocent confidence and security. It filled his heart with a new source of exquisite bliss, that lingered there, and gave form to broken visions as his faculties were swallowed and lost, or changed their action in sleep. Fever, incipient delirium, intense thirst, playing with fancy, molded the forms of a dream. He was by a clear, deep fountain, which he had not the power to reach.

He made many ineffectual attempts. There was Cora sitting by it with a long-armed gourd shell, which placed the crystal water within her power, and he implored her to dip from the spring and give him to drink, and that in playful mockery she seemed to comply, but always placed the shell to his lips empty and dry. In his agony he awoke, and supplied himself from the pitcher placed for his use. When he slept again the form of the vision changed, but it was Cora again mocking him, and so he tossed and muttered and wore the long night through. When Mrs. Winter opened the door, the slight noise awoke him. There was an instant's daze, when his position and the memory of the recent happenings to him came to his mind. Not for the world could he thus meet Cora, or even Ruth, or Mr. Hillman. He sprang up, drew on his moccasins, tightened his belt, replaced his knife and hatchet, and with his cap in his hand with Leo stole noiselessly out and pushed straight for Castle Gregory.

George's report of the condition of the young man was unsatisfactory, almost alarming, and having the horses saddled, Mr. Hillman and Ruth at once made their way through the snow to Castle Gregory. Ruth prepared to remain if she thought her presence necessary.

They found the young man threatened with brain fever, and undergoing a process of artificially stimulated perspiration. Ruth was possessed of great good sense and in her immediate circle of family friends, had experience in the care of the sick, was cool and firm, and at once assumed the care of the sufferer. The Judge had never seen much of this form of suffering. Roy had never been ill for a day, and his condition greatly disturbed his father, who had determined to dispatch a man to Cleveland for a doctor. The arrival of Ruth and Mr. Hillman was relief alike to father and son. Ruth at once

placed snow on and about the head, and concentrated all the heat she permitted to be employed at the patient's feet. The whole population of Castle Gregory was in commotion and consternation. An irreconcilable difference between old Peter and Aunt Smith as to treatment fortunately saved the youth from a much more drastic practice than a sweat, which had the authority of long usage by the Indians. Toward evening the patient's symptoms were much mitigated. In the night, with no attendant but Ruth, he subsided to a fitful sleep, in which the phantoms of his disturbed mind hovering on the borders of delirium again found expression in murmured words. It was pitiful to the watchful Ruth to hear them. In her anxiety to relieve him, she seriously meditated clipping away the tangled and curling mass of his hair; her admiration of it saved the loss. More than once came from his lips the name of her sister, once as in appeal, and once in pride. Her image, then, was part of the vision of his fancy. Letta had probably rightly heard and reported. His face was haggard, and when open, his eyes seemed enlarged.

Mr. Hillman remained till the next morning. Several times during the night the sleepless Judge stole to the door of the young man's room, and toward morning he was greatly relieved by the subsidence of the alarming symptoms. The heat passed from the oppressed head, the pitiful murmur ceased at the cooling lips, and natural sleep came to steep and restore his senses. In the gray of the morning he partially awoke, and with his half open eyes still clouded with the shadows of sleep saw the woman form by his bedside. The first thought—it was Cora, who, phantom like, had haunted his delirious sleeping fancy. As dream and phantasm yielded to the real, and his vision grew decided and strong, the noble profile revealed itself in its unmistakable outline. "Ruth!"

putting out his hand. "It was you all the time. I should have known," he said.

"Who did you think it was Roy?" taking the now cool, moist hand in hers, and bending over and laying her other hand on his forehead.

"Oh, I did not think; everything swam in my head. How good you are to me," pulling her hand to his lips. "I am so unaccustomed to a woman's tenderness and care," tears distilling from his eyes.

"You shall not miss it in the future, Roy," herself much moved. She passed her fingers through the damp mass of glossy hair, which fell back from his forehead. "Your head is cool, your eyes natural, and you are almost well."

"What was it with my head? Some of the time there was a grinning old bear hugging it. I am sure I got home all right."

"You had symptoms of brain fever. Oh, Roy, you should have come to us at once, and staid with us? You don't know how hurt we all are. I fairly broke down when I reached the hard, cold floor where you lay all night, and found you had gone." As she spoke she glanced about the room, as bare as a barrack.

"Yes, it would have been better had I let Mrs. Winter go and call you, but you see I was so—well, so broken by two or three days' illness and the tramp in the snow, and I looked so badly, and Ruth, I've been so long away from civilization." This was his first allusion to that feature of his life. And then, after a pause—"Brain fever!" and he laughed at the idea. "That's funny, father had no idea there was any foundation for that. Is it morning? Pull away the curtain." She did so. "And so you have staid with me all night? Did father send for you?"

"I came myself; father and I, yesterday morning."

"O, how good of you; how dear and precious. How did you know?"

She explained in a few words, and then she insisted he should not talk any more, but keep still and go to sleep again, and be a good boy. She gave him a cool drink and he did go to sleep. He had a large arrear to make up.

In mid forenoon he awoke, hungry, and had squirrel broth. His father came in and wanted to know of the hunt, and had the fewest words. He was pleasantly urged for details.

"An Indian boasts in his own lodge. Wait a day or two for old Peter, he'll know twice as much as happened in that time."

Old Peter himself gained admission to ask when the boat would be up and something of her cargo.

Roy's amendment was so rapid that toward evening he was permitted to be up. He inquired of Ruth of the happenings at the Hillman place, said little of Cora, and a good deal of George. When she enlarged about her sister he made no answer. He passed the ensuing night well, and was down to breakfast the next morning, a trifle languid, but in gay spirits. He met Auntie Smith that morning, who undertook to tell him of the advent of the younger Miss Hillman into her domain, which he heard in an unmoved way, a little puzzling to the good Auntie.

His deeply laden boat reached her home port from Cleveland the night before, under the charge of his own man, aided by a smith he employed to come on and take charge of a smith's forge on the place belonging to the Judge.

Peter was much excited at the unloading of the boat. There was, in addition to cured meats, a large number of deer skins, two bear pelts, one or two cats, and, what was a rarity south of the lakes, a lynx skin. Roy had a package of venison hams and jerked

meat made up. Peter was to go up to direct as to some further curing of the meats, and the whole was sent off on a light sled, drawn by a yoke of young oxen, who in the still deep snow were none too manageable. The party was on its way before noon of the day when Roy made his appearance below, fully recovered, as he declared.

After dinner of that day Red Cross and Una were saddled, and the Judge attended Ruth home. Roy insisted on performing this office, but the Judge ruled him out as an invalid, to the young man's immense disgust.

Among the freights of the sled were two small packages of mink and marten skins, beautifully dressed, which Roy procured of a French trader, of Detroit. They were of considerable intrinsic value, even at that day.

After two days Roy himself rode through the melting snow and showed himself in a suit of new clothes—cloth entire, when Cora affected to complain of his delay in the call.

"Well, you see, Miss Cora, it took me two days to recover from this coat," was the reply.

The young lady thought the recovery quite miraculous, but he might have worn the old.

It really was a beautiful fit, blue surtout style, with a dainty cape. Cora admitted her admiration of it, but asserted her preference for the costume in which she and Ruth first saw him. Then she thanked him for the furs, which she did a little effusively, and he held up his hands deprecatingly, saying that he "ought to have secured some arrangement about them before they were delivered, but he was so full of his new clothes."

"I ought to be permitted to return them," she said gravely.

"Return them? If you knew the great pleasure I had in securing them, and the hope I indulged that they would please. The

greatest pleasure of my life is to do little things," he said, abashed by the idea she suggested. The matter had been discussed, and she was clear that neither Ruth nor herself should accept them, but she had been overruled.

"You confer the greatest benefits and deny the right of thanks. Whoever confers favors confers also the boon of gratitude. We must have an understanding of this matter with you, Mr. Gregory." She spoke with unusual dignity for her, and her words and manner not a little embarrassed the young man, who felt the force of what she said, and yet failed to see any good reason for them.

Her father and Ruth were present, and quite approved the speech and her bearing.

"I see, I see, Miss Hillman. I—I haven't known how to manage these things, and—what would you have?" embarrassed.

"In addition to doing much for us, you have in a silent way made to Ruth and myself valuable presents, which we had decided to accept. I—"

"O, thank you, thank you," interrupting her, greatly relieved.

"You make us valuable presents, and thank us for accepting them," laughing. "What could be said to such a man?"

"Why, Miss Cora—Miss Hillman, I am sure you can see that the weight of every obligation in the case is on me. The paltry things cost me nothing—that is, I exchanged for them what was valueless. I had no mother—no, no—I am very sorry. Do what you will with them. I am sure Ruth here has done for me more than I can ever return. I shall never try to make compensation. I accept gratefully, joyfully, as a pure charity." He spoke very effectively. He was distressed at the turn things were taking, and wholly uncertain of his own position.

"Your sentiments are admirable, Mr. Gregory, and you must see that friendship de-

mands equality, and favors must be reciprocal," said Mr. Hillman, a little severely, Roy thought.

"Yes, all my friends have an equal right with me to all I have—a better right when their needs are greater. They may do for me what my wants require, without reference to my merits or means. I presume I am all wrong, Mr. Hillman, but I am sure Miss Ruth thinks that when I find things out, I mean to conform to civilization, whatever I may think of it."

Ruth heard this conversation with an unpleasant feeling. She knew how impossible it was for Roy to appreciate the position and feelings of her father and sister. She knew as did they, that he was giving of his superabundance, and trusted to him and to opportunities to adjust the balance of favors and kindnesses. She thought their words embarrassed if they did not pain him. For Roy Mr. Hillman's merit was his being Cora's and Ruth's father. This had been all-sufficient, but with the dissipation of the never sanguine hope he once indulged of winning Cora, Mr. Hillman would stand with him upon somewhat different ground. He did not like what he said, and especially his manner of saying it. He remembered that he had in a way pushed himself upon them. He was glad Ruth had remained silent. He thought she sympathized with him. George would remain true, and he would for their sake nurse no feeling of soreness and would show none.

The matter between Cora and himself, or his position toward her had silently changed. He had thought it over and over, always the same way, and with the same result. The family had pronounced against him. He should remain, live near her, by her, see her, meet her daily, and when he had shown that he could do this and seem not to care if he wanted to, he would go out of the woods. It

would be time to go. Ruth, who must have seen from the start what his feeling for her sister was, and who must have certainly known how foolish it was, might have said a word to him. She did not. Now let them think as they may, he thought they would find out that Miss Cora might have no occasion to ask to be excused again. He would have preferred to have gone away at once, as lovers did in books. It would have been easier, but that would have been weak, and he could not leave his father—at least, so abruptly. Of course he should always love Cora. It was his nature. That was the rule of knightly honor. This had settled itself mentally before he went away, remained settled in his daily thought on the hunt, and by the hut fire, was in his mind the night of snow and houseless weariness. It came with him to-day. It will abide with him. He would not offend by further offers of service, he decided then and there. He would do what he could for George, for Ruth, for them all, but he would not push himself on them again. He blushed that he ever had.

"Oh, we are certain of that," was Cora's meaningless answer to his promise to meet the requirements of civilized life, to which he made no reply. Nor did anything occur to any of the others which would relieve the unpleasant position into which they had unintentionally drifted. Ruth was about to intervene when George came in.

"I thought you were to be here when the snow came," he cried, as they met very warmly.

"Yes; well, I started before it, and reached here soon after it."

"Of course, but you were on your back all the time."

"Well, I brought venison enough to carry us all through, and, thanks to Ruth, I am all right now."

"O, I like deer meat dearly, but—"

"You dearly want to meet a dear?"

"Yes, just that," laughing.

"Mr. Gregory, are you sure your head is quite right?" asked Cora archly.

"It was always regarded as weak, I believe, Miss Cora. George," turning to him, "you shall have your wish to-morrow, and you and Peter and I, and Leo, will eat ourselves—extra; so there may be no waste. We can count on Peter and all the dogs."

"Shall I help?" asked Cora mischievously.

"We shall accept your aid, with gratitude. 'Any one may help me.'"

"And will my diet be limited to George's venison?"

"That's just like 'er. That's what she said when you said you would bring us that first deer," said George to Roy.

"Yes; she is impartial in her praises, I find. Let me see; the snow is heavy for a tramp, but we can find a deer without a long hunt. You come and take dinner with me to-morrow, and Miss Cora shall have a venison steak of your shooting for breakfast the next morning."

"Well, you needn't laugh,"—to the young lady. "Need she, Roy?"

"O, I don't know whether young ladies laugh by rule, nor what the rule is. This one laughs a good deal at me, and I understand that all I am to do for her is to occasionally furnish something for her amusement."

"And I shall improve the opportunities, and be grateful accordingly, Mr. Gregory," pleasantly though a little piqued by the air of good natured indifference with which he treated her.

He went into the Winter cabin and thanked the pretty mistress for her kindness and apologized for his hasty departure on that morning.

Then he had to answer George's questions about the wolves on the night of his return.

Also he was called upon to explain the mode of finding bees—bee-trees as their hives in hollow trees were called, on the snow; as also coon hunting, both of which he said involved no skill and had scarcely any element of sportsmanship in them. He promised to give them a specimen of hunting bees on the snow the first day succeeding a warm sunshiny day, if such came while the present snow remained. He assured them that it would be more stupid than to follow the track of a coon to its tree, cut it down, and kill him. It was a pure matter of vulgar gain and cruelty. The next day the young men had their deer stalk up the outlet of the pond, from the river. Rube Winter was one of the party also. George was armed with a new rifle, Winter carried a shotgun, and Roy led Leo. They were fortunate in coming upon a young doe, which George bored through and Leo pulled the poor wounded thing down e'er she could cross the river—as all wounded deer instinctively do—and it was dispatched with a knife. The party returned to the Hillman place drawing the murdered thing over the snow with Leo in exultant spirits. The two households were warm in their congratulations. The number of witnesses and the directness of the evidence was too much for the incredulity of Cora, to whom the part performed by Leo was not made known. The slain deer was then taken to the place where the first one was dressed, and the young men instructed in the removal of its skin and preparing it for the cook. At the end of the lesson the young hunter went directly home.

While the snow remained came an opportunity for the proposed bee hunt, abright warm day, sunshine and soft air. On the following day came young Gregory and the four males of the Hillman homestead accompanied him into the forest. Lured from their hives by the sun and soft air, the bees go out, and

many of them fly far, and remain until chilled; and most of them return too exhausted to re-enter the hive, and fall upon the snow at the foot of the tree, and thus betray the place where their treasure is deposited. This was explained by the young forester to his associates on their way to the wood, where they were to spread out and search for dead bees about the trees on the snow. During the past summer he learned that there was a swarm having its headquarters east of the pond, the exact position of it he had never ascertained. Into this neighborhood he now led the way, and the tree, a hollow beech, was soon found by the easily guished signs explained by the young hunter. The party were prepared with axes and pails, and proceeded to the robbery and destruction of the unfortunate workers at once. By Roy's advice the tree was so cut as to fall upon one or two smaller ones, and thus eased down in its fall, was laid on the snow without injury to the honey of the luckless bees. With the aid of an ax this was soon come at and removed to the vessels of the ruthless spoilers. The owners, benumbed and helpless, were unable to defend it. Roy pronounced it a young swarm. The comb was nearly all white, and if it was a salve to the consciences of the destroyers, it was probable that their supplies were insufficient to keep them till the return of warmth and flowers. The young man had a ready way of bringing, in an indirect manner, the morality of the foray into view, and Mr. Hillman, notwithstanding the warrant of "Elder writ," was a little moved by it. He pronounced against further bee hunting for that day. The present wrong, if such it was, was irreparable, and with a few pounds of honey and all the comb, the plundered bees were left to freeze and starve, unless speedily devoured, as Roy said they doubtless would be, by a sneaking skunk or raccoon before the next day.

On the way back he pointed out the difference in the coating of moss upon the roots and trunks of trees, it being much the heaviest on the north side, by which means a woodman could always determine the points of the compass, however dark the day. Also he called attention to the numerous tracks of animals in the snow, told what species made them and something of their habits, and the probable time when the different tracks were made, and gave much useful information of wood craft to the newly arrived pioneers.

The proceeds of the foray were very acceptable to the three young women of the household, who, absent from the scene of outrage and murder, which no graphic tongue described to them, received the sweets of the hunt with little or no thought of the despoiled and perishing producers.

The snow passed, and soft weather reasserted its mild, uncertain reign. It was greatly improved on both plantations to perfect the preparations for winter. In early December it came with every indication of permanency. It came and ruled, as in that old time, in the forest wild, with plenty of snow. Yet, sheltered by the interminable woods, warmth and soft airs lingered in their depths, where many a plant remained green, and many a bird of passage found cover the cheerless season through. Many such places were known to Roy, who, with George, visited them through the winter, and once or twice he conducted the sisters to one of them, specially favored by a high bank, a bubbling spring, and sheltering trees, "one of the throbbing places of nature, whose pulse beat so languidly elsewhere," was Ruth's descriptive account of it.

There was a regular scheme for labor pursued during the winter. At the Hillmans, chopping was the rule. The tender, succulent twigs of the trees, especially of the maple,

beech, basswood, and elm, furnished the most of the food for the oxen and cow, and much for the horses. At the fallen tree tops came also the deer, at the earliest hour of dawn, to browse with the cattle, two or three of which fell under the now more certain aim of the still over-eager George.

In mid December Roy made a solitary drive after one of the lost herd of elk, seen in that region. He was gone three days, and slew two; could easily have destroyed most of the wearied drove. One of the Winters and George brought in the beef on a sled, aided by a man from the Gregorys, who drove the young oxen.

Christmas was not a festival of the Puritans, and at that day had no recognition in New England or its western colony. The steady winter and continuous snow was favorable to immigration from the East, and there were many arrivals. The advent of a new settler was a matter of gravest moment, and hailed with acclamation by the scattered denizens of the woods. Their descendants cannot understand the warmth and eagerness with which each arrival was received and welcomed. Everything at the command of the older residents was unselfishly offered to the new comers and the most talked of individual was the last who reached the woods. Neighborhoods extended so as to link by forest paths, cabins remote from each other, and between which lay broad stretches of wilderness with intervening swamps and streams. To the latest arrived the Hillmans seemed quite old residents, and could appreciate the warmth which inspired their own reception by the Gregorys.

Roy was several times in demand to find lines and point out, and sometimes to survey the new purchase of these seekers for homesteads. George was his attendant on these excursions, to whom he was also imparting

instructions in practical surveying. An act of the State Legislature established a State road, running south from Cleveland, passing near Castle Gregory, on its way to the interior, and Roy, as being an engineer, was named as one of the commissioners, to lay out and open it. This was the method of establishing all the so-called State roads in Ohio—the passage of a special statute. The young man with a small party surveyed the route at once, and as soon as the weather permitted, with a gang of stalwart pioneers, he entered upon the rough work of opening the road, which consisted of making a passable line for travel, along or near the line of the road, constructing rude bridges over the streams, and log causeways through the swamps and wet lands, in which the young man efficiently devoted quite half of the winter. It was a work of much importance to the infant settlements, and of still greater to the young man himself. It gave him needed work; showed to him, as to others, something of his undeveloped powers to manage and command men, and made him widely and favorably known. One result was the establishment of a postoffice, which was to be kept by Ward, who had put up the common, rude buildings, and was making an opening in the woods, not far from the Hillmans, as stated. From various other points in the circle of a few miles came the sound of the axman's blows, and the resounding crash of falling trees.

The social intercourse between the Hillman household and that of Castle Gregory remained on its first footing, that of pleasant and constantly cultivated intimacy. The snow lay continuously in the woodlands from the middle of December to the first of March, and there soon came to be a hard, firm, smooth road between the two points, than which art has never invented a pleasanter or more serviceable track, while the frost holds it in a proper state. The Hillmans extem-

porized a sleigh, and after some hesitation, Roy taught the docile-spirited Una to work in a "limber-peter," the shafts of which were also the runners; a winter carriage peculiar to pioneer life, and unique.

After Roy's return from the fall hunt, it soon became obvious to the observing that there was a silent but marked and persistent change in his treatment of Miss Cora. While Ruth occasionally rode in the "limber-peter" after the fleet Una, Cora was never asked to, unless in company with her sister, nor did he attend the younger on horseback, or walk with her, and seldom or never talked with her. He certainly did not in any way seek her society; nor yet avoid her, save in not paying her any attention on her own account. At first the sisters thought this was the result of accident, as doubtless accident at times aided the young man's purpose, but they soon came to the correct conclusions that his course was the result of carefully adhered to design. That she suspected or cared, in no way escaped the young lady. Once or twice, by innocent girl strategy, she placed herself where she tested his seeming purpose, and the result confirmed her estimate of his conduct. He occasionally paid attention to Ruth, to her never, except in Ruth's company, and as her companion. Nothing could be more charming than the manner of the young girl to him, in the infrequent opportunities of their being thrown together, frank, sincere, sometimes arch and playful. An observing stranger, curious to note their bearing to each other, and seeing her alone, might suppose that she felt herself secure of the love and trust of the young man. Seeing them together he perhaps would think that with all the avenues of approach open to him, the youth purposely withheld himself. This was Ruth's judgment. She was satisfied that Cora intended to neither invite nor avoid his advance. She was at a loss how to construe

her. She at one time supposed the girl was much interested in him. She still thought she had a decided liking for him. That her heart was deeply touched in this affair, she doubted, that the young man loved her devotedly, she did not doubt. There was nothing she could do, nothing that it would be wise to attempt. They were near each other, in daily association; what each was, what either possessed attractive to the other, would in some way reveal itself and work its own office. To the silent process of sympathy or repulsion, these must be left. She had thought that this thing was to be, and so would be. She was by no means certain of it, as the winter advanced. She pretty accurately divined the secret of Roy's course. He had no present hope or purpose of winning her sister's regard, and did nothing whatever, consciously, to advance his interest in that direction. That he resented Cora's conduct toward him, she never supposed. That he would place himself in a position where she could repeat it, was improbable to her. They were young, with all the world and most of their lives before them, and she could wait. The reader probably sees clearer than did Ruth.

CHAPTER VIII.

ROY MEETS AN EASTERN LOVER.

Spring came as was its wont in the thickets and covers of the forests. The Hillmans made their first campaign in the sugar-camp, in which all the members of the family bore a more or less conspicuous part. Although the work is hard and the season one of exposure, the scene, the open, brown woods, and the time, that of recalling to renewed energy the forces of vegetable and animal life, through the increasing heat of the sun, with the attendants of that period, unite to make life in the maple woods a

cherished and idyllic portion of the year. That was followed by the pioneers with chopping for the new cornfields. The removal of the heavy growths of trees, while it is the hardest, so, in some respects, it comes to be one of the pleasantest labors of the immigrant. The road-maker had some of his principal bridges to build, after the passing away of the snow and ice, for some of which he had to await the subsidence of the waters ere his useful labor was ended.

It may be remembered that when Roy met with what he supposed was a rebuff he at the first stoutly determined to remain, and then half resolved to run away from Cora, leave her there in the woods and transfer himself to the scenes of his childhood, and perhaps go to Europe. This was in the first days of soreness and indecision. Spite of himself and his reaffirmed determination not to think of her he really had been able to think of little else as a constant theme. He early abandoned all idea of flight. At the best that would be unmanly, cowardly. A great many things came into his mind about her, and among them, though he had very moderate views of his own deservings, after all was it not possible that she might yet come to love him. At first he rejected the idea of this tardy love as not to be desired or acceptable. Love which was not spontaneous, given without question, without thought, was no love for him. It was as if bought, given grudgingly, given to solicitation, won by hard service, and at best but a half and the poorer half of love. His mind underwent various and sudden changes on these matters. Even this poor half-love thus bestowed, he came to prize highly. The chance of gaining this was but the slightest, hardly worth cherishing, and was not cherished. He would remain in Ohio, whatever was the fortune of this passion. His new public work brought needed employment,

with a healthful tone to his feelings. The edge and bitterness of the first days had passed away. He began to turn his thought to the new community springing up about him. He had a strong grasp upon it; was useful to it. There was plenty of robust outdoor work to do, such as he delighted in. There were lines to be run, townships and counties to be organized; wolves and bears to be exterminated. He never thought of being a leader, or that he had talents for leadership, but he found it was pleasant to have men come to him for counsel, and what was new and surprising, he found his father had begun to ask his opinion upon most matters of gravity pertaining to the new country, and what could be done for it. It was coming to be his father's way when men came to him about their own affairs or matters of public concern, to turn them over to him, and he who had only been known as an adventurous and skillful hunter, a famous rifle-shot and sharp shooter, was beginning to be known in the log cabins as a young man of affairs. He liked it. He was appointed a postmaster and as Ward intended to keep a tavern in his new place, he made him his deputy, and established the new office in his house. All these various matters occupied much of his time, which he was glad to devote to them. Of course, he was less and less at the Hillmans' as a consequence he saw much less of Cora. He had for some time regretted his line of conduct toward her. He could not see very well how he could have continued to seek her society, as during the three weeks following their first meeting, but he should have treated her as he did Ruth, and he began to change somewhat in his intercourse with her, making little advances in the way of attentions to her. The possibility of an Eastern lover of hers suggested by his father, as will be remembered, had several times occurred to him, and finally came to be

regarded as a probability. As to Ruth, in some way which he could not explain he came to think she had been unhappy in an attachment. Not a word in reference to this or any germane matter had ever reached him, but it was now a thing in his mind that Cora had a lover whom she favored while her sister had lost one, or was at feud with one. This thing of Cora's pre-engagement managed to fix itself in the young man's imagination in the early part of the spring, and gave a new bent to his thought if not his conduct where she was concerned. The uselessness of permitting the young lady's image to longer stand as a governing landmark controlling "course and distance," as his surveyor's phrase would express it, came to be an abiding conviction. Whatever temporary success attended his irresolute effort to expel it the sisters began to notice some change in his personal make-up, though the vacillation of his mind had little influenced his conduct. There was, however, a marked return to his forest costume, especially in the items of hunting shirts and moccasins. The fact was as stated, he went to his fall's hunt without the slightest expectation of ever receiving the favor of the young lady, and while there he reverted to almost entire savagery. It was the natural result of his loss of the small hope he had modestly cherished. His friend Brady was an artificer of forest finery, and while with him the young man laid in a fresh supply of clothing, in some of which he now appeared. It set off his person to very good advantage and it was remarked among the Hillmans, that his affectation of this dress was after all a matter of vanity with him, which did him injustice.

Ruth looked upon this relapse with disapproval. Cora seemed to favor it. Ruth did not like that in her sister.

The intercourse between the households was maintained through the winter quite on its first footing. Upon the destruction of the beautiful ice and snow track across the wood, there was less going and coming, nor were all the Hillmans at any one time at the Castle Gregory for many weeks after its disappearance.

Roy was now seldom at the Hillmans' except on Sunday, and Ruth had to deplore his growing unpunctuality at their hour of cherished worship. The season was quite advanced. The sugar camp was abandoned, the trees were getting well in leaf, the brush in the choppings had been burned in a great fire, the trunks of the trees piled up and consumed, and the dark blades of the young corn in broken rows could be traced over the ugly surface of the blackened stumpy ground. In the woods the stronger, gayer, and fragrant summer flowers had succeeded the frail, odorless blossoms of spring. The red bud had disappeared along the river, the flaunting dogwood had faded on the side hills, and the June plum was maturing its fruit in all the woodlands. Rank herbage grew wild everywhere. There was a fragrance of oxbalm and wild thyme, of wild roses on the rich bottoms, with the hum of bees and the gleaming wings of humming birds over their beds of pungent fragrance. The open grounds were fringed with yellow columbine and variegated with tall wild sunflowers. Young summer was everywhere seated and bearing sovereign rule.

On one of the sparkling mornings, a Sunday in June, Roy arose very undecided as to his course for the day. Cora was as usual the disturbing cause. He admitted that he wanted to see her very much. Had intended to go over there. He would go. But then why should he? What good would it do? He had plenty of excuses for going. He knew he did not need an ex-

cuse. He used to go without any. He sauntered off to the river and had a good swim. On his return he was as infirm of purpose as before he went. He had intended to dress in surtout and top boots. He would not go at all. At midforenoon he did go in hunting shirt, moccasins, and wampum. He felt best in them, and, though he never thought of it, he looked best in them. Within these few months his face had gained much in character. The boyish faun look-lack of expression had disappeared. The brow was more marked, the wide, dark eyes had a steady, unabashed gaze, the beard had thickened and lost its gosling-greenish aspect, pretty though Cora admitted it was, and, while the form had lost nothing of its suppleness, the carriage had gained something of unconscious dignity. Youth was ripening rapidly into decided manhood. His was a face and form which always attracted admiration. They would now command respect and confidence. Cora had never called him pretty but that once. Nothing farther possible from thought of himself, his looks or manner, was in the young man's mind as he rode leisurely through the wood on this dewy morning in June.

He might stay all day, and removed the saddle and bridle from Una, and left her in a small enclosure where were shade and rank grass and herbage. He approached the house from the back way, and walked around to the piazza. As he came so as to command a view of the front he was arrested as if the power of motion or change of position was suddenly lost, though observation and reflection were unimpaired. He had gained one end of the piazza, and saw walking from him a pair of whom one was certainly Cora, around whose slender waist was a man's arm, resting there unproved as if that was its own proper place. It was part of a tall, well formed, well costumed masculine figure, which towered

above and bent to her; and as they turned to walk back, well featured, and rather handsome, was the face; and still youthful. The whole had the unmistakable air of breeding and of association with the best. Here was a man of society. Roy felt that, and this was their manner of approach to him. They were perfectly absorbed by each other, he with his face turned down and his eyes looking into hers; she, her face in color, lifted up and her eyes in his. It was Cora. On they came till his deep toned low voice reached the ear of the terror fixed youth. They came within two yards of him, turned and walked away, as unconscious of his presence, as if he had been a disembodied spirit. Then they turned back toward him, swept about, the maiden's skirts almost touching him, and away they moved in an intense oblivion of the surrounding world. These were lovers. The youth had never seen a pair before, and though in a way prepared for such a scene, or for the appearance of the foreign actor in it, the effect of this vision of the two, thus placed under his eyes, was quite that of paralysis upon the spectator. He now felt as he never had, how much Cora was to him. Light and warmth passed from the sun, color from the sky, and life throbbed faintly in the young man's heart. There they were, each the world to the other. A confession in words could not more clearly declare their relation. An open half embrace, oblivious absorption. How sharply and clearly the young man made mental note of them, and appreciated the revelation which proclaimed itself. From the point by the veranda's edge, he recoiled to a small stake or post, placed in the ground, for some outside use, two or three yards from the building, which gave him its support for a minute or two. Fortunately no one saw him and he was spared the mortification of being a spectacle. It was past his power to conceal the

effect which the appearance of the pair produced on him, nor at the moment could he have thought of that. A full minute or more elapsed before thought of himself returned, and that was a wish to escape—steal away. No one at the premises had seen him, and why should he not go? What mattered it if they did see him? What did he care for any or all of them now, or what they thought or might say of him? It was not much in him to run from anything. And all the time the slow moving lovers walked to and fro over the floor, or made momentary halts or pauses, as some common thought or impulse dictated. To Roy it seemed as if he had stood by the little rough barked post for an hour, vacillating in his purpose of retreat, when the sound of approaching voices reached him, in the direction of the spring. If the vision of Cora and her companion had driven the blood from the surface of the young man's body, the sound of these voices sent it leaping through every artery, and excited and half angry, he turned now, equal to any exigency, to confront the approaching party. One of them he knew to be Ruth, the other was a voice never before heard by him. He turned, as Ruth and a gentleman came up the bank from the spring, fully in sight. The stranger was a well looking, well-dressed man, not unlike the other in appearance, and younger. When his eyes fell on the person of the young man now before him his looks betrayed surprise.

Ruth came forward and greeted him in her usual pleasant way, and said of her companion, "My cousin, Mr. Daniel Wheelock, of Boston," and turning to that gentleman, "This is Mr. Fitzroy Gregory, of whom you have heard." Ruth said this in her best way. The young man's faculties were on the alert, as when he faced the panther. The amused, surprised look of Wheelock, and its probable cause, did not escape him. He had

never been matched with a man in a social way. Had never within memory seen society men before. He saw and felt the difference between them and himself, at once. A thought of competition with them would never enter his mind. He had no idea of withholding respect from them. He would to-day be quick to detect its lack toward himself, by either of them. He did not like Wheelock's manner and there was a curl of the beard on the upper lip, and a flash of the eyes, but he lifted his cap and made a graceful but haughty inclination of the head, to the still wondering Bostonian, which would have troubled that gentleman to imitate. He did not advance, offer his hand, or say anything; but something in his manner recalled to the stranger that he was introduced to a gentleman.

"Only a cousin in name," he managed to say, remembering the words of Ruth. "It carries none of the cousinly privileges;" now smiling pleasantly and ready to go forward.

"Oh, some might regard the name a great privilege," Roy said carelessly, turning and exposing his person and dress to a leisurely inspection, which he felt with indifference.

"They only arrived here this morning," said Ruth, who saw that Roy stood at his full height, and wondered what had happened. "They reached Mr. Ward's last night, where they stay for the present," she added, wishing to say something to relieve an awkwardness felt by her. Roy bowed to each statement as entirely satisfactory, and calling for no reply from him. Ruth looked at him a little anxiously, and asked, "How long have you been here, Mr. Gregory?"

"About an hour."

"You have been introduced?" with a look in the direction of the piazza."

"To him?" with an answering look that way, "it is unnecessary."

She looked annoyed. His manner surprised her also. "Mr. Gregory, I wish you to make his acquaintance," passing her hand within his arm and conducting him toward the veranda. They stepped upon the slightly raised floor, and awaited the return of Cora and her attendant. As Cora discovered them she paused, leaving the gentleman in Ruth's hands.

"Mr. Lyman, Mr. Gregory. I shall be pleased to have you acquainted, and I am sure it will please you both." Her manner was cold and a little constrained, not wholly in accord with the words, and unlike her manner when introducing Wheelock. Lyman was taken wholly by surprise. His first thought was that the very young man before him was in masquerade. He made an amused survey of him, from face down to moccasin, and back. His eyes rested on the face an instant with a new surprise, and then met a provoking glance of Wheelock's.

Roy endured it with enforced indifference. He lifted his cap when their names were mentioned, and as Lyman showed no signs of recovering a sense of propriety, he turned and said in reply to Ruth's neat little speech: "Your wish should be law, Miss Hillman, I will await Mr. Lyman's leisure." A glance at Cora attended the last words, which had a flavor of sarcasm also. He turned away to meet George, who fortunately now approached with Bruno, and thus furnished something to which his attention might be given.

The two gentlemen exchanged looks again of somewhat different significance; as young Gregory walked away.

"Well, by jove, old fellow!" said Wheelock to Lyman, approaching him, when he still stood in silence, "This beats our time. We shall have to mend our manners."

"They could be greatly improved," said Ruth, tartly. "It may not be worth your

while, though, here." This was irony as well.

"Well, what business has a gentleman to be playing an Indian dandy? It is good enough for him," said the annoyed Lyman.

"Don't flatter yourself that he can care, Mr. Lyman," answered the vexed Ruth. "He is in his usual dress," she added.

"Oh, he's equal to the occasion," said Wheelock. "See how he moves off. He would beat Beacon street;" as he observed the careless air of the man they had insulted.

Bruno ran to meet his old master with joyous barks. As he reached him he leaped up, was caught by the youth, and dexterously thrown over his head. He turned, and the feat, one of much address and strength, and which both were familiar with, was repeated. Not even George had witnessed it before, and while the others could not withhold admiration, Ruth, at least, regretted it. She was certain it was due to an unknown something, which must have disturbed the poise of the young man, usually so cool.

No one was in a devotional frame of spirit, and the usual worship was, by common consent, omitted that morning.

Roy and George went off through the woods to the pond for a needed lesson in swimming to the younger.

Later Ruth and Wheelock moved in the same direction.

Lyman rejoined Cora, and the two resumed their walk and conversation, and the day glided on.

At about mid-afternoon the two young men returned from the pond, George with his hands full of white lily buds, some of which were even ready to open. He went directly to the house to place the stems in water. Roy separated from him at the margin of the forest, and went to look after Una. On the way he passed Cora and Lyman occupying a seat between the trunks of two trees. He was

quite upon them before he was aware of their presence, and although he passed within two or three yards of them, they seemed oblivious of his approach, while he assumed to be oblivious of them. He led Una to drink from the run below the spring. While there Ruth joined him, looking a little anxious.

"Are you getting ready to go home, Mr. Gregory?"

"Yes."

"Will you not remain to dinner? It will be ready soon."

"With your guests? No. How can I?"

"You are equal to anything, Roy. I think you had better. I much wish it."

"I am sorry I am not equal to these gentlemen. I will not willingly meet them again."

She was greatly perplexed. "Roy, I blame them; I know neither of them intended the least disrespect to you."

"I don't care if they did, either way is perfectly satisfactory to me."

"You took them entirely by surprise."

"And that when I had been talked over to them," scornfully.

"Roy, you know we all greatly admire and entirely respect you. These gentlemen will apologize, are ready to."

"I don't wish them to. I don't care. I want to go away."

"Has Cora said anything to you to-day—anything special?"

"She has not spoken to me to-day. I don't think she has seen me."

"Roy Gregory!"

"I believe she has not seen me."

"She has a very special thing to say to you to-day."

"You can say it to me better."

"She is to do it."

"It concerns her more? It needs no explanation to me."

"Has George told—anything?"

"Not a word."

"Roy, you must wait till I can find Cora."

"She is up on the seat under the trees—or was," turning away.

Ruth walked in that direction, and Roy, followed by Una, returned to her saddle.

While he was adjusting it to her Cora came tripping up to him a little out of breath and her cheeks overstained with color. As she approached he turned to her, standing by Una with one hand on the saddle, into which he was about to vault. The girl came up very near him, and with one hand toying with the mare's black mane, she raised her eyes frankly, and yet not without a little effort to his. Conscious, he thought.

"Roy," she said, "you must not go now, no matter what has happened. You must remain to dinner; there is every reason in the world why you should." She spoke as if her word settled the thing.

"Then I must show you that I am the most unreasonable man in the world, for I shall not stay."

"You will not; when I ask you to stay?"

"No." There was no infirmity in his voice or manner.

The girl changed color, showed signs of distress. She turned her eyes from the young man's face, and with both hands toyed a moment in Una's mane in silence. "I—I wanted so much to tell you something. There is no one else," she said, agitated. "I had such trust in you. I've had such foolish girl thoughts of you. You once made me think that you more than liked me, now you are angry with me. You hate me. What have I done?" looking up bravely in his face now.

"I hate you? You say this to me?"

"Yes, I do," now dropping her eyes.

"Say it, then," turning from her for an instant. Then his eyes came back to her face. "You know in your heart and soul

that I love you, I have always loved you. I live in wild savagery with all of nature's sweet things; all her strong things. From the heart of the sweetest and strongest, comes my love for you. It neither seeks nor asks. It serves and is silent." He spoke angrily and turned his eyes away as he ceased.

Once or twice the girl made attempts as if she would interrupt him. When he ceased she said, "You shall not talk to me this way. You have no right to. You know you have not." The voice was plaintive.

"You taunt me and then complain. No; I will not say this again," sadly, every shade of anger absent from his voice, as he said this.

"O Roy, if you really loved me you would not—you could not talk so to me," a little plaintively still.

"If I loved you what matters it," turning away again depressed now.

"Roy, were I a dog, a hungry, helpless dog, you would not throw me a bone in half the scorn with which you throw your love to me. You are tender to everything else. You spare the wild beasts. If you love me you have drawn it from the heart of all bitter things also. One dying for it, could not accept it." There was reproach in her tones.

"No one expects you will accept it," still bitter and depressed.

"The love which will serve in silence, is so cruel and angry that I dare not ask a little thing of it," was her answer.

As she spoke his muscles relaxed and he came near falling. An instant and he recovered himself.

"Miss Hillman—I—O, I don't know how much I am to blame; how I wrong you and the—the—I said I would never speak of that again. I don't know in what terms to ask your pardon. Let me do my best for you. What would you have asked of me?" His voice now plaintive—sad.

"Nothing now, Roy. I cannot tell you now. It don't matter. Some day I will." There was sweetness and tenderness in her face, and in her voice, and tears shone in her eyes.

"I shall not again forget," he said.

"And you will go back with me?"

"Yes. Ruth told you how bad I was behaving. Orson was sulking in the wood, and you came to lead him back for the amusement of your cousin. Your—your Boston friend."

"He is very dear to me. How much and what, I am to tell you some time. I could not bear that you should go away from them as you were going; I saw you; saw and heard all that happened. I want you should show them how superior you are. Any man would have been angry. Few men could meet them again as if nothing had happened. You will. They are strangers where you are a lord."

"They may command all I have, do what they will." Still under the sway of the bitter spirit, which these words called back, the girl turned to caress the mare. "Una, girl, sweetheart—you know those names, don't you? What has happened to your master, Una? He would have love unasked, and the stranger must seek his courtsey. That is not like him, is it, Una?"

He turned and was about to remove the saddle. "No. Let her stand with it, I will not detain you long, and I will never forget this hour," she said, and then led the way to the house. They walked slowly and in silence, both wanted time to gain composure. Near the house Ruth came out and met them. Some mute telegraphy passed between the sisters. If the last thing from Ruth was an interrogation, it was met with a negative. The elder did not fully read the face of the younger. It showed something of a serene joy, notwithstanding the shake of the head.

Roy caught a gleam of it, which he referred to the presence of Mr. Lyman.

Roy was satisfied that he had never liked Mr. Hillman very much, and especially from the time of his return from Sandusky. Since then he had avoided him. That was the reason of his unpunctual attendance at worship when that gentleman was present. It was more the manner of Mr. Hillman that was unpleasant to him, than anything he had ever said or done. On his return to the house with Cora, he met her father for the first time that day, and the elder gentleman received him with such cordial warmth that the impulsive boy wondered that he had ever thought him cold and distant, sore as he was at the discovery of Cora's position. He found the strangers on the veranda, as if awaiting his approach. To them he said in the most natural way: "Gentlemen, I fear I was rude this morning. I did not even welcome you to our woods. Let me do so now," and he offered his hand to Mr. Lyman.

"The fault was mine, Mr. Gregory," said the gentleman, taking his hand, "and your frankness adds to my regret. Things are new and strange to us here, and we were a little unmindful of our mother's first lessons, eh, Wheelock?"

That gentleman was as frank by nature as the young woodsman himself, and grasped the hand extended to him almost with ardor, saying, "I know Mr. Gregory will forget the funny way we met this morning."

The apology of young Gregory to the strangers for their rudeness to him reminded Cora of his gratitude for her acceptance of the furs. She wondered whether he was not too good for the naughty world in which he found himself, and Ruth thought he would receive many cuts and stabs ere he would shield himself from the inevitable hurts to which his frank nature

exposed him, as the new world should grow populous and broader about him.

Mrs. Winter had announced dinner, and this was in the elder sister's mind on the way to the table.

There, save her father and herself, the guests seated themselves as happened, and Wheelock and Gregory were side by side.

"Mr. Gregory, said Cora, "you will sit here," one remove, "I will take that seat," she said, placing herself in the vacant chair.

"Between civilization and savagery," said the young man as he obeyed her.

"Which makes her a barbarian," added the Bostonian.

Ruth looked up; she wanted to say that there was, as she thought, a leaning to savagery, as with all barbarians. It was invidious. The same thing was in the mind of Wheelock. The youth designated himself as savage, and he remained silent for the same reason.

The table was sumptuously supplied. For various reasons no one except Wheelock and George did the viands justice.

"Were you in the war here Gregory?" Lyman asked.

The young man colored and hesitated.

"He was in the war," said Cora. "He was placed in command of Castle Gregory, and as the enemy did not attack him instantly, he went in pursuit of them—made a sortie—they call it."

"I was not aware that the enemy were so near here," said the gentleman.

"Some sixty miles I believe," answered the vivacious girl, "and it is said that his party were the first to find them. There is a famous old chronicler at Castle Gregory, who shall answer your question in full, Mr. Lyman."

"You may have knowledge of her power of sarcasm and I am her sole subject," said the annoyed young man, to Lyman, scarcely hiding his pique at her speeches.

"O, I have made up my mind to devote a good deal to you," said the young girl in response, now very rosy, "you may come to like it in time, Mr. Gregory."

"We are a little disappointed in this region," said Mr. Lyman, desirous of doing his best at conversation.

"It does not meet your expectations?" remarked Gregory, to whom he addressed himself.

"It arises from my inability to rightly apprehend the conditions of things, here. Common I presume to those who have never seen a country so new, so savage and rude. I had no idea of the endless woods. I thought I ought to get through them, or see through, somewhere, sometime."

"Instead of which the farther you went, the deeper you were buried, and must go all the way back to get out again."

"So it seems. Your famous Ohio is a vast dim outline, filled with shadows and scarcely receding night."

"It may be our fault that we are so few and far between. We have done what we could to persuade the world to come here. We are borderers, Mr. Lyman. Whoever lives long in the wilderness becomes a barbarian. We have broken up some of the haunts of wild beasts, hunted out the Indian, made it safe for civilized pantaloons and Christian coats and vests. We are ready to yield place to them; and follow the Indians toward sundown."

There was sarcasm in the young man's speech, which those who knew him had begun to notice as a new flavor in his conversation.

Mr. Lyman, who was not greatly encouraged in his effort to promote cordial conversation, asked the young man if he was a native of Ohio.

"Few of the natives were born here," he answered. "This was merely their hunting and battle ground."

Cora laughed, "a native here is an Indian, Mr. Lyman," she said in explanation to the mystified Bostonian. "Mr. Gregory was born in the ancient Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and of white parentage—I believe, Mr. G?" with a mischievous flash at him.

"I never heard that point discussed, Miss Hillman, but you might have added, that I was carried West at so early a day, that the Commonwealth did not greatly suffer by my birth in her borders." This was said in a pleasant way.

"Perhaps your early departure was a compensation," said Cora, with all her mischievous spirits on the alert.

Then as the dinner progressed a sprightly conversation sprang up over the incidents of travel between Massachusetts and Ohio.

After dinner Mr. Hillman produced the hymn books, and Roy was constrained to remain against his wish. He wanted to get away, be alone. After the singing Cora brought him a sermon to read, selected by herself. She thought he read unusually well. Mr. Hillman made a prayer standing, as were all the little congregation, after the manner of the Puritans. The prayer was long and fervent. Then there was an earnest petition for one of the visitors with reference to a member of the petitioner's family, which Roy understood to be Mr. Lyman and Cora. Some passages would have been a little misleading had he felt at liberty to seek meanings other than devotional from a prayer of his host. It would linger and he dismissed it with a vague and irreverent notion that the

power to whom it was addressed would know all about it. It was not intended for him. The exercises were on the whole pleasant in their effect on the members of the small party.

As Roy was about to leave, Cora found occasion to whisper to him, "Was it not best that you remained?"

"Whatever you wish is best," he answered coldly.

She looked up in a quick, surprised way which puzzled him a little. She said nothing, and he soon rode away, agitated and depressed, as he could not help being.

A man reared in the silence of nature is reticent, brooding, mute. Even her birds endure wounds and hurts in silence. Savage animals remain silent under blows. The cowardly wolf dies in the trap, and makes no moan. The Indian warrior in the presence of civilized man expresses neither joy nor grief, and meets torture and death with a smile. Nature in silence and solitude, imparts the spirit of mute endurance to her children, and this her young son whose infancy was nursed in the arms of civilization, with his heritage of a thousand years of culture, had, under her silent pupilage, been changed to the stoic. And now filled with anguish, he would not admit to himself that he suffered. As he rode along mechanically he scanned the trunks of the trees, cast his eyes up through their tops, whistled an old tune, and resolutely refused to feel or think, yet he did nevertheless. He found the world of the woods had changed since he rode through them in the morning. He would never pass through them so light-hearted again. Strange that a thing which he had looked upon as certain should work such a change when verified.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RESCUE.

On the appearance of Ward's gentlemen guests on Monday morning, the landlord exhibited to them the half of a freshly-slain deer, which he said had been sent with the compliments of Roy Gregory. The other half, as the messenger said, he was to take to Mr. Hillman.

After breakfast the young hunter made his appearance at the hotel, in costume much like that of the gentlemen he called upon. He paid his respects and invited them to his father's house, excusing the elder Gregory for not calling himself. He also made proffer of services, placed himself at their disposal while they might remain in the country, which, as they informed him, must be limited within two weeks.

Lyman wished to go to the Hillmans that morning, and they went in company till within sight of the clearing, where Wheelock and Roy parted from him and struck off for Castle Gregory. It was a delicious morning of the early summer. The forest leaves were two-thirds grown, and the ground garnished with rich herbage and gaily pranked with flowers. Wheelock was a spirited young Boston merchant, full of young man life, and though without marked rural tastes, he was not without a quick-witted, intelligent man's appreciation of natural objects, especially of forest scenery, when aided as now by a lover of it. The birds were in full song, and Roy got him to distinguish the notes of two wood thrushes seemingly answering each other, as their habit of song is. Roy could tell him the names and something of the habits of the birds they saw, as of those they only heard. So of the plants, while the trees he named as far as they could be seen. Their uses and capabilities as timber he explained, as they sauntered leisurely among them.

Very leisurely they went, Roy getting upon the qualities of the wild lands, costs and expense of clearing, and the kind of crops that could be grown. From that the way was open to the young man's estimate of the new country, its needs, hopes and prospects. When they reached the cleared lands of the Gregories, the young merchant felt himself well informed, and he declared to the Hillmans that evening, that he had learned more of the country in an hour's conversation than in a journey of 600 miles from Boston.

He was charmed with the Gregory plantation, a wide sweep of civilized greenery in the heart of the interminable forest. Here were old fields, herds of cattle, horses, and sheep, even the rooms were attractive to the forest-sick eyes of the young man, and compared with the succession of low, rude cabins, the mansion was quite stately, almost imposing; certainly the grouped buildings were not without a certain picturesque effect, surrounded as they were with trees and shrubs in leaf, and some in bloom, while in the distance around all, arose the mighty, living wall of trees, to the eye impenetrable.

He was greatly impressed by Judge Gregory, a stately gentleman of the old school, passing away, even in high-toned, formal Boston. He received the young man with great kindness, had known an earlier generation of Wheelocks, and was familiar with the receding Boston of a generation past. The young merchant liked the house, quaint, unique, and its abounding profusion. He saw Peter, but young Gregory was careful that he should not hear him. The young man himself had grown rapidly in the esteem of the young merchant. From his first glance of surprise till he saw and contrasted him with his father, the favorable impression was deepened and confirmed. Simple, natural, with the nameless something of blood; high thought,

and gentle instincts, never mistaken in the pioneer's cabin or the drawing room of society. At dinner the younger man took no wine, which the host excused as a lack of education, which Wheelock noticed produced a smile on the face of the youth, and he gave him credit for more knowledge of the world than he could claim.

After dinner the young men went down to the river, where Roy pulled his guest about in a boat, and returned to an early tea. Of course they talked of many things as young men do, or rather Wheelock did. Roy had little of the habits of a young man. He had never before in life associated with a young man so near his own age and quality. He did not know what young men thought or said, and Wheelock impressed him as a man of vast experience and boundless knowledge, while the merchant looked upon the young man of the woods as very reticent, when he had no ideas whatever on the subjects brought for the first time to his notice. Wheelock fancied on yesterday that he was under some sort of a cloud; the impression deepened to-day. He associated Cora with it and spoke of her in a way which called for a reply. Roy made none. Then Wheelock asked him what he thought of her, determined to call him out.

"You see, Mr. Wheelock, since boyhood, I have seen no young ladies but these—Cora and her sister, and I don't know anything of girls."

"Why, they have been here nearly a year, and you must have seen a good deal of her."

"Yes, and I fancy I know something of Ruth. I believe I know less of Miss Cora than at the end of the first week of her acquaintance."

"That was at the time of killing that panther, I think that must have brought you pretty near to her." As Roy made no reply to this, he added, "A man placed as you are

must think some about such a girl. There is nothing better in old Boston."

"A man situated as I am, may think it best not to think at all," was the response.

"O!" Light broke on the mind of the enquirer. He looked long at the handsome, grave face, while thought was very active. He did not return to that subject. He thought of pushing observation in another quarter. The Judge wished to make a dinner party for the following Wednesday, and Roy was commissioned to invite the Hillmans and Wards.

Roy returned with his guest on horseback, and his companion asked him to point out the battle ground of the panther adventure, which he did; the guest having managed to get sight of the stuffed skin at the castle. He observed that the young man did not dwell on the scene, nor did he describe it with spirit. When they reached Ward's they found that Lyman had not returned, and they proceeded to the Hillmans', where Roy was also to deliver his father's invitations. His stay was short. He did not see Cora nor Lyman.

Wheelock found them with George on their way back to the house from the pond. Cora walked with him.

"And how do you like Castle Gregory, Dan?" was her first.

"It is almost a paradise—a little rough set here in the woods."

"And the Judge—the 'Forest Baron' as Ruth calls him?"

"Why, he is one of the grandest gentlemen I ever met. He looks at the first a little forbidding, like an old cliff in shadow. The moment he speaks the sun lights it up beautifully."

"Well, Dan, really," with a laugh, "you are fairly picturesque. Well, and the—" finishing with a look.

"Oh, you don't name him, and he won't speak of you," was his answer to the unfinished question.

"O, he won't?"

"No. I asked him what he thought of you—a plumper."

"O, you did?"

"He said he thought it wisest, or best, not to think of you at all. What do you think of that?"

"I think it is wise, if he adheres to it," the color deepening.

"Oh, you do! He said he did not know you as well now as at the end of his first week's acquaintance with you."

"Poor fellow. A pursuit of knowledge under difficulties," laughing.

"He's ad—born prince, Coz. Cora," with the freedom of that old time.

"Princes may be stupid, and so may be—as you say."

"See here, Cora, Castle Gregory wants a mistress."

"Did you see Aunty Smith? I will have to send her word."

"Oh, pshaw! A young lady about your age and size?"

"Yes. My age might answer, and size, possibly. You see what I have on my hands," with a glance at Lyman.

"He be hanged!"

"He has thought of that," gravely.

"Well, that can't last. I know by the signs."

"The young lord of the castle has dogs, and horses, and boats; he doesn't think of a mistress for his wild wood barony. That is Ruth's, poor, dear girl. She is poetic for one so strong and just."

"Doesn't he think of it, though?" answering her second assertion.

"What puts this into your head, Dan?"

"Well, he's depressed. I noticed it last night; and to-day I watched him. How can

he help it, here in the woods with the birds and things, you know?" laughing. "Where do you expect to find such another man? Compare him with Lyman, who is a — noble chap, with, well—" finishing with a look.

"I don't compare him with Lyman, and gentlemen don't swear in the woods, Dan. He don't."

"No, he's modest; too — modest, and such a girl as you could help him on."

"My hands are full now. But, Dan, what are your notions of a girl's helping a man on? Such a man. Ruth said he was like Adam."

"O, easy enough. A woman is born for love and poetry, and she takes a man right on."

"What if he takes himself right off?"

"Eh? Off is he? Tell me about it. There's something in it, I know."

Her answer was a peal of merry laughter.

"Does he know about Lyman or suspect?"

"Not a word, and he never would suspect anything."

What he did suspect was of a matter too obvious to him to stop with suspicion.

The dinner at Castle Gregory was followed by a game dinner at Ward's hotel, on Saturday, the material for which was furnished by Roy and Peter.

Three days later all the parties were invited to the Hillmans'. All were there but young Gregory.

Lyman did not make for himself a favorable impression on the Gregorys or Wards. Distant, sombre, and absent, he seemed not to care to please, evidently, or find pleasure in the society of anyone but Cora. He appeared rather to avoid Ruth, whose manner was often cold and constrained.

Judge Gregory thought as did Roy, that in some way Lyman was a source of uneasiness to his Boston friends.

Roy said nothing of Lyman's position toward Cora, of which he saw daily evidence. The Judge observed the intimacy between them, but had not received a clue to what was so obvious to his son. At the dinner at the Castle the young lady was as usual attentive to the Judge, otherwise she permitted herself to be absorbed by Mr. Lyman. The Judge noticed, however, that she sent a great many of her keenest shafts at Roy, and that he seemed passively helpless under them. He made no effort to parry or reply, save by a faint smile, enforced by his sense of what a gentleman—a host—should do under the circumstances. The young woman lost ground in the old gentleman's eyes. She was merciless, and he knew Roy could have given her no provocation. He was at first surprised and then became angry. Finally the youth's lack of spirit disgusted him. He would have forgiven him had he turned no matter how sharply upon her. Wheelock noticed her conduct, and asked Ruth what it meant. "I am waiting to see," was her reply. At Ward's there was a difference. Roy could avoid the young lady, and did. When he met her it was with good natured indifference. The Judge was not displeased to notice that this course annoyed her. Here she had Lyman on her hands. Roy did not go to Hillmans' on Sunday, or Monday, and did not attend their party Tuesday afternoon. The Judge rode the bay mare over. Cora seeing him approach alone met him at the opening through the fence leading into the road. The Judge dismounted and shook her hand. She certainly was at her very loveliest. As he was tying his horse he noticed her eyes were turned along the road by which he came, and a little anxiously.

"And he—where is he?" she asked very frankly.

"He; whom do you mean, Miss Cora?"

"Who? Why, Judge Gregory; to make me ask, who can it be but Mr. Gregory?"

"O, Mr. Gregory. Ah, indeed, so he is Mr. Gregory?"

"He was always Mr. Gregory."

"Oh, yes, very formal, very formal. Doubtless that suits him."

"I am sure, Judge Gregory, he could manage to let me know what would please him. I don't think he cares for that."

"He thinks every one yields him all they think he deserves. He accepts that and doesn't complain." This was said gravely.

The girl stood with her eyes on the ground, and then, "I have not seen him since Saturday. He avoided me then. He did not come Sunday nor yesterday. I was certain he would be here to-day. He will come?" looking up with real anxiety in her expression.

"No, he will not be here to-day. You see the commissioners of the county want him to help determine the site of the new court house, and I must make an excuse for him."

"O!" her face breaking with dimples and light. "That will do. They can't get on without him, can they?"

"So you think that is a good excuse for his absence from your dinner party?"

"Perfectly good. I like to see a man give attention to his public duties."

"O, you do?"

"Indeed I do; and I think he has a great many qualities that fit him for public places—high places. He is cool and brave, and he knows. Yet he lacks in one or two things."

"No more? He does not know how to please a young lady?"

"Judge Gregory! Haven't I eyes? It is not that at all. He lacks self-assertion. His place is the first—to lead."

"Well, he is very young, you know. So you like to have him lead?"

"It is his place. Then he doesn't half believe in me," dropping her voice and eyes, the color filling the cups in her cheeks.

"Doesn't believe in you, the infidel!"

"And doesn't trust me at all," now raising her eyes.

"Doesn't trust you?"

"No. You do, don't you, Judge Gregory?"

"Do you trust him?"

"I always told you what I thought of him."

"So you have. And I have always believed in you," said the Judge with a fine generalization, though he was far from having full faith in the one thing he most wished of her.

"And you always must, Judge Gregory."

"Have you noticed, Miss Cora, that the young man has seemed a little under a cloud lately?"

"Under a cloud? Why I have not seen him since last Saturday," evasively.

"I have observed something like it, ever since he came home a week ago."

"I hoped to see him on Sunday. I did not know that he would not be here to-day. I want to see him very much."

"Very much, Miss Cora?"

"Very—very much."

"Shall I send him over when he comes home?"

"Do, please."

This conversation was had with the young lady's hand under the Judge's arm, as they walked from the entrance into the fields to the house.

Roy's absence was a grave disappointment to Mr. Hillman and Ruth. The sufficiency of the excuse had to be admitted. The Judge did not think it necessary to explain that the engagement was one of many days' standing.

The Judge rode away at twilight, a pleased and hopeful man. Cora had devoted herself to him all the afternoon, she then accompanied him to the open fence, and received

his hand after he was mounted, and stood looking at him as he rode into the darkening wood, with the charm strong on him. There was one little thing that alloyed it, on their way out, she gave him to understand that there was a special thing that she wanted to tell Roy of, and he knew that if she did this special thing was doubtless something, or about something, that Roy did not want to hear, or thought he did not want to. But then her manner was even more than her warm words, and on the whole, there was a large general balance in his favor. Had the Judge been critical or suspicious, he could have found in the praise of Roy itself cause for moderation of hope. He was neither where this young lady was concerned.

Roy reached home the next forenoon and found his father in brilliant spirits. As the messenger of a maiden to a lover, who probably had not declared himself, the Judge was as circumspect as the young lady could wish. He delivered her words, and suggested that the young man spare no time in waiting upon her. Roy apprehended that her wish had reference to the something which she wanted to say when he overwhelmed her with the scornful declaration of his passion. He remembered also that he had promised Wheelock some deer shooting by a fire jack on the lake that night. He gave orders to Peter, and himself, on the way to Mr. Hillman's, followed up the old Indian path to the pond to ascertain the whereabouts of the larger boat. It was a holiday time at the Hillmans', and most of the household were in the vicinity of the lake; Mr. Lyman and George were in the skiff, rowing about. Just below the landing place, by the old Indian camp, was a patch of white lilies which attracted their attention, and toward which George directed their course from above, and Ruth and Cora were on the sands by the little spring brook watching their progress and movements.

They gathered some two or three lilies. In attempting to reach another Lyman lost his balance. In his effort to recover himself he overset the little boat in deep water, not twenty yards distant from the sisters, and under their eyes. The motion given the light craft not only upset, but sent it out of his reach. He fell into the water almost head downward and backward. He righted himself, came to the surface, could not swim a stroke, and had no knowledge how to keep himself afloat. There was no floating object in his reach the unexpectedness of the catastrophe and the element in which he found himself, for the first time, left him without presence of mind, and rendered him powerless. One glance about him, as he realized the treacherous character of the material he was in, showed him his utter helplessness. The thought of death, and of a manly resignation to the inevitable, struck him together. His face was toward the appalled sisters, and his eyes were on one of them, as without an effort, a word, with a despairing smile on his lips, he sunk slowly beneath the waters. The sisters had turned, and clasped each other about the waist. When he disappeared Ruth, with a gasp, sunk upon the sand. The braver Cora, with a shriek, rushed into the water as if to rescue the drowning man.

At that instant Luna leaped past her into the water, followed by Roy, a light and powerful swimmer. He went in springs, half out of the water, past the paddling dog. At the point where the unfortunate man disappeared, he plunged. Cora thought he was an age below the surface. It was the smallest part of a minute when he re-appeared, bearing above the surface the head and upper part of the form of the drowning man. Luna, sagacious thing, was there ready to aid. She placed herself on the side farthest from her master, and taking one of Lyman's arms at

the shoulder in her mouth, helped to float him to the sands. When Roy could touch the bottom with his feet, he lifted him in his arms and carried him to the dry sands. As he came near Cora, she caught the nerveless hands and aided in his support.

As the young man laid the burden on the warm sand at the maiden's feet, these were the words he spoke:

"I bring your lover to you. He will recover."

"Thank God! Oh, bless and thank God!" were her words in response. She bent over him with eyes now dropping tears.

The shriek of Cora and an out-cry from George reached the ears of their father and of Wheelock, and they came running in alarm to the place, just as Lyman was laid upon the sand. Roy laid him with his face downward, his head the lowest, and imparted a gentle rolling motion, to enable the water he had taken to escape. Already the obstructed lungs were making a vigorous effort to recover their full function; and the pulse was strong in the vigorous frame. A word explained to the male friends the accident. Cora turned to the side of her recovering sister, and her father and cousin assumed the care of their reviving companion.

George, when thrown into the water, was near enough to catch to the boat, by which he buoyed himself, and with which he drifted a few yards. He gave out two or three lusty calls, and then at his perch awaited events. To him Roy turned when relieved of the care of Lyman. Taking his cap from the ground, where he threw it in passing to the aid of George's fellow voyager, he now entered the lake more leisurely, accompanied by the faithful Luna, for whom he now found a word or two, and who responded in her eager, demonstrative way with joyous barks. With some good-natured words of half banter and chiding, the young man greeted

his wrecked friend. He turned the boat to its proper position in the water, of which it shipped so much that he aided George to regain the shore, leaving the logged little dory where she lay. On landing George, the other parties, in the midst of whom Mr. Lyman was now standing, were about to start on their return to the house. Cora left them and came to meet George, and Roy once more turned to the lake to recover his boat, without further words to any of his friends on the shore. When he relieved George, he called Luna's attention to the Indian paddle floating near, which he directed her to recover, and she was now swimming with it in her teeth toward the shore. Relieving her of it as he moved through the water, he proceeded to the boat, which had drifted below a little point of willows, hiding it from the view of any who might still be on the sands. As the rest started with Lyman on the return, Cora and George lingered a minute or two expecting Roy would land his boat there. As he did not, she shook out her drenched skirts and gathering them up in her hands, with lingering glances at the deserted lake, she reluctantly followed her friends with the silent George, who, dripping and chagrined at his own poor figure in the catastrophe, had not recovered his spirits, and who could not in the least understand the troubled look of his usually self-poised sister.

"What is it, Cora, everybody is all right?" he said.

"No, no, George, after doing this, he has gone off alone, with no one but his dog with him;" the solitary picture of her fancy not so palpable to the literal youth.

"He is used to that; and used to the wetting."

Cora made no answer, and the two hurried after their friends.

On Roy's return home he greatly disgusted Peter, by countermanding the order for the

night's hunt on the lake, but the old man was placated by being told to get the guns ready, and they would go out with Leo. Peter should be stationed at the runway, and Roy and Leo would drive a deer to him. Very soon the pleased old borderer was equipped with "the shell bark," as he called his rough old flint lock rifle. Roy did not want to meet his father, and they were off across the fields towards the river, as soon as he could get into dry garments. He was hardly out of sight, when George Hillman rode up with a note from Cora to him, and a message from his father and Ruth, earnestly requesting his immediate presence at their house. The Judge had instant search made for him, and was exasperated to find that he was last seen with old Peter and Leo, making off. Then he heard George's glowing narrative of the accident at the pond. He was greatly excited by it. No other naval event since Perry's sea fight had so moved him. He condemned the young man's flight, and held himself as deeply injured by his withholding the event from him. He was angry at "Old Pete for persuading him away. It was his doings, of course." He did what he could, he sent by the returning messenger a flask of nice old brandy, and two bottles of wine for the use of the recovering Lyman, with an injunction to use the first with freedom, and the other as he felt like doing.

He held Cora's note, the first of hers he had ever seen, certainly her first to Roy, and contemplated it with more longing and expectation than the youth himself would have done. It was not sealed. He regarded himself as in her confidence. She would be very willing he should read it. Roy, like a young idiot, had run off to the woods. He read it. It was a charm for him. It told him more than it did later to Roy. He walked about quite excitedly, went and had a talk with Aunty Smith, with whom he had exchanged

words before on the subject. Then he had Una saddled and held in readiness, and sent messengers off to listen for Leo's bay. Then returned and hurried Smith about the supper, wondering if, after all, his son was slow blooded. Aunty Smith afterward said that she had not seen him so anxious for an expedition to start since the memorable march to Cleveland after Hull's surrender.

At near day-close Roy returned. The drive had been successful. He saw the mare saddled, and was told his father wanted to see him.

"Don't you think you are a fool?" was the paternal salutation to him.

"I've had my father's word for it. I presume he spoke truly."

"Well, you are." Roy thought of the scene of the panther night, and as then made no reply.

"Save a man's life, run away, not tell your father, and run off with old Pete! I wish all the deer, and guns, and—read that," thrusting Cora's note at him with a motion like a stab.

He took it and read as follows:

"Dear Roy.

"I want to chide you, you really deserve it. You stole away, and left me waiting on the shore, you saved a life, dearer and more important than you know. You would not wait for thanks. I know how uncomfortable wet garments are. I don't even know that you are safe, though I am sure you are watched over; God will certainly keep and bless you.

"Come to me to-night. You will come.

"Dear Una will gladly bring you. Let precious Luna come with you. We all want you. CORA."

"What do you think of that?" demanded the Judge a little fiercely.

"That they want to see me." His face was a little pallid and his eyes cast down. That "dear Roy" hit him hardly.

"They! She! 'Dear Roy!' are you blind?" pointing with a finger.

"Dear Una! Precious Luna!" with his finger to each. "You see Luna is precious, while Una and I are only dear," controlling himself.

"Yes, yes, I see, I see!" a little vexed; "but we must have her in this house, you understand?"

No answer.

"You will go, of course."

"Yes, there is something which she wished to tell me." He glanced down at his stained dress.

"Never mind the clothes, Roy."

"You would not have me carry blood stains to her?"

"Well, well, no; and supper is ready. Eat your supper. There will be a splendid moon. Take the dogs. Somehow, ever since you killed the only dangerous beast in the State, I'm shy about your going through the woods in the night, Roy."

When he went out for the ride, his father went with him. After he was mounted he held his hand up to him. "Roy, something is to come of this, mind, and I shall be up when you return. God bless you."

The grave dignity, almost solemnity, of his father, and the tender voice in which he spoke, impressed the young man a good deal.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT CORA TOLD ROY FINALLY.

The young man deliberately mounted the waiting mare and, attended by the faithful Luna, rode thoughtfully across the intervening fields, into the darkening wood. His words and manner had somewhat shaken the sanguine Judge in the certainty of his own inferences. He might be mistaken. The as-

surances of Cora's manner may have lent a meaning to her ambiguous words, quite beyond her intention. Still, his last words expressed his abiding conviction. It was only within these later months that he was coming to realize how much the youth was to him, and it was quite within that period that he had begun to form expectations—to build upon him. He was almost profoundly sad when the young man with a signal to the watchful Luna rode away. He stood where Roy left him, watching him, never withdrawing his eyes, till the cherished form, passing through the last broad shaft of sun rays, which lit it up with a golden splendor, went suddenly from it into the shadow of the forest, and was lost. He looked long into the vacant, darkened space, and with a feeling of loneliness and desolation, turned thoughtfully back. The weird transmutation of day to night, with its perpetual mystery, was silently working in the forest depths that swallowed the young form. Already the aroma which the dewy twilight sets free from foliage, stole gratefully upon the appreciative sense of the youth, and he turned his face to catch it more abundantly. How palpably at this hour all his life was present to him. Of what small significance the sum seemed to him on this first grouping of results, and forecasting of prospects.

I too take final account of him as he goes thoughtfully to this tryst.

Reared in seclusion by a refined mother, whose fine qualities he inherited with the virile manliness of his father, carried at a tender age into the primitive haunts of nature where he matured, taking all life and impressions at first hand where the tender, strong and heroic qualities develop naturally; without arrogance as without egotism; he was unconscious of any unusual possessions, and their exercise was in the

orderly course of his life. He knew no other life, no career with which he could compare his own. His fancy was tinged with tales of knightly adventure, his mind broadened by desultory reading and study. All had been mused upon and thought over in the grand presence of the mighty forest. He grew to manhood naturally, in the absence of the restraints, the stimulus and circumstances of artificial life. A child developed to a man by simple direct process, when there appeared at his side a beautiful maiden, from one of the oldest of our centers of civilization. For very many days these two walked and rode side by side through the forests, in the unrestrained freedom of primitive pastoral life. To him she brought a revelation of himself, his needs and position in the actual world, visions of which she gave him, as also glimpses of his duties and labors in it. He became a lover at once, had a lover's doubts, and felt his uncertainties, felt himself rejected, and suffered a rejected lover's pain and anguish. Then he turned and called up the latent strength of his nature, and reached out silently for such helps as the world about him proffered. In many respects he now went forth a different, yet in all essentials the same man, as on that night he met and slew the panther. It was as if in that he met and overcame the last force of savage nature that arose in his path to the new world of men and thier civilization, of which he was soon to become an important part. As shown, he accepted that adventure as he did the causeless reproof of his father, as in the due course of his life. To him nothing was eventful, but the appearance of Cora in the woods. How long ago that now seemed to him. How the world had changed since then, and himself still more. One thing to-day had saddened him, a glimpse of the possible unworthiness of his own nature, a revelation of its hidden baseness. From the

moment he saw Cora and Lyman together, he believed they were the dearest of mutual lovers. That belief, though a certainty, had been strengthened. His brief words to Cora over the man's prostrate form were the utterance of his absolute conviction. In their truth her response was certainly an acquiescence. He reached the bank of the pond in time to catch a glimpse of the sinking man. He felt that he was going to certain death. It flashed on him with the light of the nether world that the man who stood between Cora, love, and life, and himself was passing, might be left to pass foreveraway. The thought struck only to appall him. He shuddered to think that it could come. He knew that he repelled it instantaneously. Its sole effect was to stimulate him to the utmost exertion. He remembered that when he first lifted the recovered form in his arms he pressed it to his heart in an ecstasy of gratitude that he had not yielded to the blasting suggestion—that he was in time, and that it was with a real joy that he laid the lover at the feet of his affianced, and could say that he was safe. All the afternoon this thing had been stabbing him—that his nature must be base to make the thought possible. Cora knew all his heart, must this baseness be confessed to her? He was going to receive her thanks for her lover's life, because he did not permit him to perish. Surely there was small merit in this. He would think no more, and turned to inhale the outbreathing of the life of the trees, set free from the rejoicing leaves.

Just under the outer trees which formed the ever receding margin of the forest, was a slender white form, and near it the dusky statue-like Bruno. To them gambled Luna. Roy saw Cora there awaiting him. He thought it strange, as he went on she came forward to meet him, in the now deep shadow of the wood. He stepped to the ground by her side, leaving Una to follow. Cora was

the first to speak, which she did with maiden hesitation.

"You—you went away from me, Roy," very low she spoke.

"I could hardly meet you then, another had better claim." This he said a little coldly.

"A better claim?"

He made no answer. They had reached the open ground, and then while he fastened Una's rein to the limb of a small tree, the girl caressed Luna, lavishing epithets and phrases of tenderness on her. As the young man again came to her side, she said to him, "You said a very strange thing to me this afternoon—the only words you spoke to me."

"Strange—a strange thing?"

"You said he was my lover—you had brought me my lover. 'I bring your lover to you,' were your words."

"And you thanked God for it," turning away.

"You—I remember the things you said that Sunday."

"Yes, they sounded strange, also, though you know they were true. You said I hated you."

"And you saved Mr. Lyman's life for me—for his and my happiness, believing we loved each other?"

"I don't know what else I could believe," dropping his face, and then, "I—I must tell you one thing now, before we go further, before I see the others." They stopped, and he told her in his simple, terse way, the thing which had caused him such bitter humiliation. He made no excuse, attempted no palliation.

"It leaped upon you as that fierce panther would have leaped upon me had you not interposed, and you slew it as you slew that." This was said very spiritedly, and dropping her voice, "I am glad you told me this. I do not believe there is another man who

would." She pressed nearer him and timidly placed her hand within his arm and they moved on. It thrilled him, yet he dared not touch it. She placed it there that she might the better say what she had wished to tell him. "The life you saved, Roy, is dear to me, to us all, to a large circle. I am to tell you what I intended to tell you that day. I don't know whether I am sorry or glad I did not. I should had it occurred to me that you would think of me what you did. I should have told you had you not—" She paused. "Edward Lyman and my sister Ruth are husband and wife, joined in sacred wedlock."

"Cora, great heavens!" halting in utter amazement.

"He you thought to be my lover, is her devoted husband, loves the ground where her shadow flits. It is a story to tell," passing her hand more securely within the fortunate arm and again moving slowly on.

"I will only give you the outline now. He is of one of the old, old families, and we did not know very much of him, personally. He was a little wild at college, we had heard. He met Ruth and fell in love with her. She is one to fall in love with. You have always seen her under a cloud—this cloud. Of course she returned his love as girls do," dropping her face with these three last words. "Three months after their marriage, it came out—he was a gambler—a mad, infatuated gambler. With him it was a frenzy. Again and again it broke out in him. She parted from him. Father justified her, and finally so did his friends. There was no other way for her. Their lives dragged on. She broken hearted, he madly repentant and by turns a crazed gamester."

"I never knew that such things could be," said Roy, who could hardly speak in his surprise at everything thus opened to him.

"I did not before. With him it was a mania. They were married four years ago and lived

together a little more than a year. Then came our other misfortunes. My mother died"—a pause. "Well, father, when he could look around him again, decided on Ohio, and we came off. That was a shock to Lyman. He is a noble man by nature. He seems to have made a last desperate effort to break from the slavery of this weakness. He has not played since. Well, he came on here, to win her back to be his wife. Dan Wheelock came with him. He offers to remain here in the woods; clear land, will do anything. Well, Ruth had Old Testament notions. She loves but she can't trust him. It would kill her to go back, or take him and have him relapse. She thinks she must dedicate herself to father, whom you don't know, either. Well, father, he thinks Ruth is right. You see, Roy—I am his only friend. I was fifteen when they were married; and Edward was a dear brother to me; and that is the reason why he is so much with me here. I have been almost afraid he would commit suicide. He did not care to live. He made not the slightest exertion to save himself to-day. It was on her his look of awful despair was fixed. Were you near enough to catch it, the faint, dead smile on his lips? When he sank she fell. It was her voice that called back in him a wish to live. She would have given her life for his then. With her it was all over. Nothing but the love in her heart spoke in her voice to him. She is now with him, hanging over him. It was just within the gates of death that they met again. He had passed them, and, Roy, you brought him back to her. She will thank you for him; and he will thank you for her." Her voice was a little broken with these last words. "How strange it is! God sent us off into these awful woods that he might follow and all but die; here, where you were, that you might save him. It is wonderful! wonderful! and Roy, I, who came so

heartsick, it—it seems as if—as if—” she could not say what she had determined to say. Spite of these months of freedom, the repressive education of her race, the everlasting laws of her nature, maidenly necessity to be asked, made her silent, and she knew that he could hardly help her to say what she thought was right for her now to say, that he would not ask for what he most wished. She wanted to make some sacrifice for him. They approached the house. Roy thought they were to go in. He did not care to, now. Seemingly Cora did not care to. The soft, exquisite free night was about them with warm voluptuous airs and a flood of moonlight, with the notes of the mysterious whip-poorwill coming faintly from the forest depths like the throb of a heart. No, Cora did not care to go in. She said as much: “They have each other. We need not now think of them, Roy.”

“We need not think of them, Roy.” O no, no; he could not think at all; had not for many minutes. He hardly comprehended the tale he had heard. Broken fragments of thoughts and feeling were chaotic in him, in the midst of which and out of it all; over it all, one exquisite, blessed thing was rising, growing more certain, more glorious with the love of God shining through it. He could not speak it yet. It was hardly made for words. They were not its natural expression.

They had reached the rude little veranda flooded with almost radiant moonlight, and after a moment's pause and silence, the girl stepped upon it while he remained on the ground, thus placing her face higher than his. She turned it with the soft light upon it, and looked tenderly down into the dark eyes in shadow, that turned up to them with their great pleading appeal. There is a more beautiful language for the lips than words, and theirs by a common impulse united in

its expression. Roy did not then dare to clasp the slender waist so ready to be yielded. She lifted her face which had bent to his lips.

“It is so! oh, it is so! you do love me Cora!” he cried in an ecstasy.

“It is so, Roy. It is so. I do love you.”

Then a trembling arm very gently stole about the little waist, and they clasped their hands and knew that they belonged to each other. Nothing more was needed.

“O, how glad father will be!” was Roy's next speech.

“I am so glad,” she said tenderly, “and our mothers' spirits will bless us.”

By an impulse as natural as that which joined their lips, they knelt side by side, and in simplest words, asked God to bless their love, itself such blessedness. And Luna stood by intently noting it all, while sedate old Bruno sat pondering graver subjects, apparently. When they arose: “Now you must let Ruth and Edward thank you; and Luna must go in too. How glad you must be, and I am so proud of you, and thankful, and so humble too, when I think how you came. Surely heaven was in it.

Ruth met them and led Roy to her quite restored husband. If he had ever thought him cold and repellant as Cora's lover; as Ruth's husband, snatched from death and restored to her arms by himself, he found him a transformed being, whose ardor of gratitude was embarrassing.

“Fitz Roy, son of a king, rightly named. You give like a prince. I owe you for life, and what makes it a benefaction,” was one of his speeches.

“And I want to kiss you, Roy, in devout gratitude,” Ruth said to him. He bent and proffered his bearded lips.

“Cora's kiss is on them, I know by your looks. I will not rob them of it,” she said, with a glance at her sister.

"You may have it, Ruth," said the radiant Cora.

"He can replace it," said the father, whom in his confusion the youth had not before identified, and turning to Cora he added, "I should greatly like to see him do it."

To kiss a man's lips not her husband's, father's, or brother's, cost Ruth a little effort. She carried it off gaily, and said, "Now Cora." The brave child hesitated, then she shyly and hastily touched the lips that her sister's had but brushed, while surges of roseate color deluged the faces of the lovers both.

These were Puritan children of two generations ago.

As Cora turned from Roy she was clasped in Ruth's arms and kissed with happy tears. "O, you blessed sister! Sometimes I doubted," she said.

"I knew you did. It was awfully funny. Yet there never was any doubt."

Roy found his hand warmly clasped by the father. He would have spoken. He could not, nor were words needed. These usually so assuredly self-contained were all beyond the habits of race and their own usual constraint. Mr. Hillman did not speak. What he did, when Cora was released from Ruth's arms, was to substitute her hand for his own. Then the still half bewildered youth fully comprehended his new relation to them all. The act was finished with a silent benediction of the hands of the father.

"Father," said the tearfully happy girl, "we have thanked God for each other, and asked him to bless us."

Luna was inside. Ruth had explained to her husband her sagacious part in his rescue, and she was now brought forward for grateful caresses and praises, and Ruth told him of the time when they first saw this favorite. Later Wheelock and George came in from Ward's, and there were a good many more words spoken. Most of the party had now

found their voices. In some way, with the inconsequent logic of a boy, George thought he had something for triumph over Cora in her engagement to Roy.

"Well, you see what you had to come to, old Cora. I'm glad of it. It's just good enough for you," at which there was a general shout, Wheelock crying "Hear, hear!"

Admonished that in some way there was a funny irony in his speech, "Well, I don't care. I knew she'd have to surrender anyway, sometime," he added, and then Cora caught and kissed him.

"The fact is, as I suspect, George," said Ruth, "from all I have seen, it was our favorite who had to surrender. I very much think that '*old Cora*,' as you call her, went out and captured him."

"Well, I shall tell what she used to say about 'im, anyway." He reserved that comfort.

Roy must return to Castle Gregory. Of course, Cora went to see him start. It was such a delicious night, and they had a right to linger now with each other, and, while they lingered, Una whinnied to her master.

"She calls you, and I must let you go," and they walked toward her. The girl looked into the darksome wood, and a half fear came over her, for him.

"Let Bruno go with you, too," she said.

"Are you afraid for me?" pleased with the anxious voice.

"I shall feel better," she said.

Una was untied and followed them, as Roy would go back with her to the cottage.

She called Bruno.

"Give me a bit of ribbon, or something," he said, "and when I reach home I will tie something to his neck, and he will carry it back to you."

"Oh! that will be precious," pulling the ribbon from her hair and fastening it to the lapel of his coat, in a pretty way. "There,"

she said, pressing it gently with her hand, "How long will he be gone?"

"As long as it took Puck to put a girdle about the earth."

Then he rode away, attended by Bruno and Luna, and carrying the thought and heart of the girl with him.

She stood watching as he was lost in the wood, and then listened till the light leap of the supple Una died away, and the acute ear of the maiden still detected the echo of the hoof beat in the forest, after she could no longer hear the stroke which it repeated.

Ruth came out to her with half embracing arms, and hearts full of precious things to talk over, they walked up and down the little piazza till the alert ear of Cora caught the heavy foot falls of the returning Bruno, whose errand she explained to her sister.

He came bounding to his mistress, giving out good natured diminutive barks when he discovered her. She untied the ribbon from his neck, and he walked down to the spring brook, in which he laid himself, and leisurely lapped the cool water.

Cora found a neatly made up package of greenery in which were two half blown roses, springing from the same stalk, with their clustering leaves, the stem of one of them branched as she discovered, and bore a budlet hidden by its principal flower. Cora showed it to her sister in silence.

"O, of all things! was there ever anything so cunning? Do you suppose he saw it, Cora?"

"Of course not," and with them pressed to her lips the sisters went in for the night.

It was a long evening to the Judge. He spent the most of it in the open air. Once or twice he conferred with Aunt Smith. One of his remarks filled the simple soul with dismay. She gathered from it that if a real mistress should appear, she would no longer be needed. She had never taken that view

of it, and it filled her solitary heart with foreboding. There could be no possible home for her, when she left the old castle. Of course the Judge could not mean it nor could Roy. She would ask him to build her a little cabin where she could sometimes see him. She had not thought this of Cora, but it was right for her to have her will. She could not object to her having a little hut in the edge of the wood. If the Judge's heart was anxious, hers was sad.

The Judge was on his way out just as Roy dispatched Bruno on his return.

"O, you are back!" going rapidly toward him. "Why, what is that?" he cried, as the heavy manstiff bounded away.

"O, nothing much. Cora would have Bruno come to keep the bears from eating up Luna; and I have tied some roses to his neck, so that she might know we are safe."

"Cora! bears! Luna! Bruno? Jupiter and Cupid!" cried the polyglot judge, in whom a confusion of ideas produced a diffusive utterance. "Well, I like that," as his ideas condensed, "she is tender—the blessed child! The roses are deuced goodish, and Roy, my boy," in a confidential way, approaching the young man: "Tell a fellow." The idea of the stately Judge saying "fellow" and applying it to himself struck Roy as rather good, even then.

"Do you remember one of the knights of King Arthur, who, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth, was so happy he 'wist not whether he was a foot or on horseback?' I am in that condition exactly, father."

"Ah ha! ah ha! it's all right, is it? is it? is it?"

"Why can't I tell a fellow? Of course it is, father. I believe I'm in heaven, and it must be right."

"Whora!" shouted the excited Judge, leaping three feet into the air, and coming down on a hill of promising youthful cucumbers.

"In heaven, are you? we are all in heaven. What did I tell you? say, what was it?"

"That I was a fool. I doubted if I took that from my mother—all of it."

"Oh, we are all fools, old Pete, Granny Smith, and all. By George! I would like to know how it came about, finally. I will bet a lot of land, the girl did the most of it."

"Well, her part of it, I presume."

"You don't mean that she had to ask, now, Roy?"

"Well, no; though I had it from her lips, which was better for both of us."

"Well, well, you are in heaven, of course. Can't you tell how that happened?"

"She will be here to-morrow, Judge, and you shall ask her if you will. I could not tell you if I tried." Neither of them noticed his calling his father judge.

He did, however, manage to tell the story of Ruth and Edward Lyman, which he did very well; and then he made his escape to his room, and soon after heard the Judge enter his own.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DAY AFTER NOT LEFT TO THE IMAGINATION.

Though we languish for rain, there is nothing of which we weary so soon as a rainy day, unless it may be the pages descriptive of the happiness of lovers, after they are assured of it. My history for the ordinary reader ended with this night. I linger for a hasty sketch of the next day. I never liked to have things left to my unaided imagination. In the morning Cora stood in her night robes by the window, unable to separate the real from the visions of her dream. It was the actual sun which now shone through the tree tops. An oriole's note came to her from

the young elm where his nest hung from a spiny bough. The notes of the hermit thrush which came from the near margin of the wood were the song of her dream. She stood a moment to fix in her memory the vanishing forms of her vision, wondering if she should dare tell the imaginary history to him. It was very real and exquisitely charming as it turned, and she regretted to awake. Then her eyes fell on Red Cross and Una under the trees. Five minutes later she flew down to look for Roy. She found him with Mrs Winter at the spring preparing the strawberry bass and perch he had that morning taken from the pond for breakfast. The young wife noted the shy, silent gladness with which the two met—only one or two common words. So new was the happiness that it was not yet to be shown much, in the presence of others. She saw the roses on Cora's bosom, and that Roy noticed them also with pleasure. Cora wondered that he could be so early at the pond.

"The kingfishers and fish-hawks were there before him. The whippoorwills had gone to sleep. The pond was waking under its light curtain of vapor. A mother duck was abroad with a little squadron of ducklets," he said. He washed his hands in the spring brook. The young wife carried the white, translucent fish up the bank, and the boy and girl only bashfully took each other's hands and walked up behind her, with no effort to linger. What a festival that breakfast was—the restored wife, the recovered husband, and the fresh young lovers. They, and especially Roy, were the centers of interest. Roy was accused of not tasting the material food, and was uncertain whether it was true. He was greatly embarrassed by the way in which they would speak of him, as of a bright-eyed, cunning child, that did unusual things, and who did not know, and did not mind being talked over in his own presence. He put an

end to that by saying to Ruth, "What a relief Adam's fall must have been to him."

There were words and questions to Cora, such a wish to know how some things came about, all of which she parried with considerable color, which brimmed the dimples, all the time playing in her cheeks.

She was to spend the day at Castle Gregory, and finally ran away from the table to array herself in the blue and gold habit. The horses were brought around and the girl was lifted from the veranda to her saddle with an ease and grace that were applauded. Her cavalier placed the daintily booted foot in the stirrup, and adjusted the flowing draperies about the form, and then with kindling eyes and roseate face she sat a center of love and admiration, while he, unique and as peerless in his way, mounted noble old Red Cross and came to her side, when the picture was complete.

It was blessed to be loved as the girl knew she was, precious that the love of all these came to embrace that love. It was precious, this admiration, which she felt to the roseate tips of her fingers. Her eyes swam in the liquid light of joy, and tears of utter gladness stole into them.

"Please take a little turn around and let us see you," said the rejoicing father. Roy turned the horses' heads so that Cora might have the inside, and, signaling the horses, they galloped around a circle of a hundred yards in the morning sunshine, his face reddening in the thought of being in any sort a spectacle, though taking to himself no part of the applause which greeted them as they completed the little round. Luna accompanied them, leaping and barking joyously as she ran. Then, with the applause and the congratulations of those dearest to her, the maiden, happy, proud, and exultant, rode away by her lover's side, into the dewy forest. Roy thrilled with a man's blissful sense

of proprietorship when he placed Cora in her saddle. It was natural that they should want to see her on horseback. He was as proud of her as mortal man could be, only she and his exultation were not to be shown off. Now as they turned to ride away alone, each to be all to the other, the atmosphere of a dream of golden glory surrounded him. The idea of display was new and repulsive. Very slowly they rode away, slowly and in silence. When the horses spontaneously would move out of a walk—"We are not to hurry, are we, Roy?"

"No," checking his horse.

The word came from the depth of a silence too rich for words.

"You do not feel like talking," said the girl from the rosy depth of color.

"No, do you?"

"I feel like laughing, like singing, calling out with joy."

"Like praising?"

"Yes, with joyous sounds, with cries and gladness."

As they entered the unbroken shade of the forest the memory of her dream came to her and her wish to tell it, and she grew sober, and looked gravely up into the eyes that were constantly turning to her. Nothing of her varying mood escaped him. His eyes seemed to inquire.

"I want to tell you my dream of last night—I *did* want to. I somehow don't see—you see,"—laughing, with the pretty dimples coloring. "I don't see just how I can."

"Don't you? Then don't try." He wished for nothing more.

"Well, but you want to hear it—that is, you would."

"If I knew what it was," laughing in turn.

"Yes; thank you, that helps me some. Do you want me to tell it?"

"Very, very much." That would give him an excuse to look at her, as the thought came to him.

"Well, you are to keep your eyes away from me, as much as you can, and let me look up at you. I like to look up to you." She looked up with a sweet seriousness for a half minute into his face, and dropped her eyes, then she began. "Well, we—you and I—were in the woods, alone—not *that* wood, nor any I had ever seen. I only remember we were walking along pleasantly and carelessly, and all at once I missed you from my side. I called to you and you answered, as if you were very near me, and yet I could not see you; and you asked where I was, and I answered. You said you were coming to me, and I started to go to you, and we kept calling to each other, and going, and yet instead of getting to each other, or nearer, we were constantly going farther and farther from each other. O, what an awful feeling it was when I found this was so, and I stopped and called, and you answered, but your voice grew fainter and fainter, till it became an echo, and then died entirely away. I held my breath, my heart stopped its beating. I listened, could hear nothing. I called, and the wood gave back my voice in an echo which mocked me. O, Roy! In this world I never was so wretched and miserable. I could not pray, nor think, nor walk, nor move. The day had changed, the sun was gone, and the woods darkened. Things about me changed. Instead of the open, beautiful woods, everything was wild and savage. I tried to walk and I could not. I was lost and deserted. In my dream it was as real, as real in its black gloom and misery, as this day is real, with sun and heaven. O, what did it mean?" Her face blanched with the memory of it.

"Was that the end? Did you wake?" a good deal moved.

"No, no. I don't know what happened. I was oblivious for a time, perhaps unconscious. The first thing I knew after that I seemed to awake in a new, strange place. It was just at the dawn. I was still in the wood, and my first sense of consciousness was taking in the faint fragrance of the sweet, clean woods, in the morning. My next was the feeling of security, restfulness, and peace. I found myself carefully wrapped, reclining at the foot of an old tree, and—and you know it was only a dream—anything can happen in dreams, you know—my head—it was very funny, and it was very sweet—look away from me—my head was resting on your shoulder. I was as blessed as I had been wretched." She dropped her face, on which the ingenuous color had greatly deepened.

"Is that all?" eagerly. "It was a dream, you know."

"Is not that enough?"

"And I—what did I say? O, I ought to have dreamed it, too."

"You hear me tell it." Ingenious, this.

"Well, was there anything more? I must have found you, and carried you out. Tell me that."

"Of course you did, but I know no more of it than do you. It was light. The sun rose through the trees, and the birds—thrushes and orioles—sang in their branches. I was in a bewildered way, and turned to look for you, but you were not there, the trees were not there, nor anything of my dream. I seemed to be standing in my room. I ran to the open window, and heard the birds and saw the sunshine. Then I knew I had been dreaming. I looked out and saw Red Cross and Una. I felt awfully lonesome. When I saw them I knew you were here, and—and I dressed myself as quickly as I could, and fastened those blessed roses on; and, Roy—you deserve it—I ran down to find you."

She looked up bravely as she concluded, but her eyes fell under those of her lover.

"Now you can see why I wanted to tell you, and why it was hard to tell it she added."

"O, I am so glad you told me, Cora. It was the strangest, dearest dream that I ever heard."

"O, is it not? I am glad I told you. I was not glad I dreamed it. It was hard to tell," as if to herself—the last words.

"Surely its end was—was—" he hesitated for a word.

"Blessed, Roy."

"I think all dreams are happy that leave happy impressions. Had you wakened in the darkest of it, it would have been—oh, so horrible! What can it mean?"

"Roy, that is one of the reasons why I wanted to tell you."

"Do you attach any special importance to dreams?"

"Don't you?"

"Not the slightest—my own dreams."

"Not to this one—dreamed last night?"

"Well, I don't know. We are all 'such stuff as dreams are made of.' It is very strange."

"Help me to its meaning. It was sent for something. I have not had time to think it out, or to tell Ruth of it. I tried to say one thing last night, Roy, when I was saying that it seemed as if Ruth and Edward were sent away here into the woods, to work out, with your help, their reconciliation. I tried to say that I was sent here also to—to find—my—husband;" dropping her eyes and voice with these words, and the cups filling with color in her cheeks.

"Was that it, Cora?" brightening.

"You see I could not say it. If I had, I should not have said that word, you know."

"Husband? Don't you like it?"

"It is the dearest word in the world."

"Except wife—my wife. It seems impossible. Am I in a dream?"

"Well, we both dream now, Roy, if either does. So we shall wake together, if we do. Well, it was in my thought to say in some form what I have now said, and it might be this was worked out in my sleeping fancy. I was in the woods, and you came to save and solace me."

"That may have colored your dream."

"That was not it. We had just parted. We knew each other's thoughts and hearts. No, this is its meaning, Roy: We may unwittingly separate, drift apart."

"What do you mean, Cora?" in surprise.

"Not wandering from each other, as in my dream; that is not it: but—but in our hearts, our souls, our loves; and not finding our way to each other, save with great suffering."

"Do you think that possible?" in alarm.

"It doesn't seem so. The warning came to me as the thoughtless one, Roy. I should not have told it to-day, perhaps. A woman can't keep anything—to herself, I mean."

"O, I think this is a precious thing to tell on this morning."

"I am glad you do. I shall keep it in my heart and never let the trees and thickets come between us."

Then they rode along some time in silence, each with momentary deeper thought impressed. That peril from such source could be in wait for them, the youth could have never dreamed. That it had been suggested to the bright being at his side, impressed him as a source of new wonder, as proof of rare excellence.

"Roy," she said at length, "this which we feel for each other now is, after all, more to a woman, and I think it belongs more to her to watch over it; and I must be the practical one."

How strange and funny these words sounded from her lips, and he laughed a bright,

joyous young man's laughter, in which she joined.

"To think," he said, "of the lady thrush twittering such worldly wise things to her mate ere the nest is built."

"Yet the lady birds, as you know very well, find the places, and do most of the nest building, and quite all the rest; while the lords brush their coats and sing, quite all the day through. What do you think of that?"

"That the lords have the best of it. But we won't have it so. We are not birds."

"Yes, I know. But the higher poetry will come from you. It is in your nature, and I am glad."

At which, as he did not quite understand, and the conceit flattered, he laughed again, and she joined in it. They halted at the creek, to let their horses dip their noses into a pool, just above the track. Roy stepped down to gather a purple Indian girl's moccasin, which grew on the bank. They were rare in these woods, as everywhere. Cora had never seen one before, and indulged in a little flutter of ecstasies over it. She received it in an ungloved hand. As Roy stood leaning on the horse it was the most natural thing that he place his lips upon the hand. An equally natural and a more blessed thing, as in the love of her assumed duties the girl bent her head low, that her lips might be as favored as her hand. The heart of the wood had never had such a thing enacted in it. In the half minute's silence the tinkling voices of the brook might have been heard. A funny old raven flying over peeped down, his ivory bill piping the queerest notes of mockery; a male pigeon with neck and breast of azure and burnished crimson, in a loud, good natured, prolonged note, announced to his mate, brooding her two eggs in her wicker nest on the beech limb, that it was entirely right. None of these were noted by the human lovers. Only as they rode up the little

ascent a red squirrel ran snickering up a leaning tree, and Roy said: "He thinks it very funny, no doubt;" and they both joined in his mirth.

Cora observed that her lovely lady slipper had somehow received a disfiguring indentation, and was consoled when he told her that he was cultivating them of both colors at the castle; that it was a fear of damage which prevented his sending her some of their flowers last night.

"I am glad you sent me these instead," was her reply, dropping her eyes to where they rested on her bosom, with a little color deepening in the little dells which appeared in her cheeks.

They passed the barrier of the cattle range, and Roy, looking up at the southing sun, said: "An elderly gentleman is looking northward, a little anxiously."

"O, we must not keep him waiting, Una!" and away they went in a full gallop.

As they neared the old leaning basswood, Cora drew her rein. "To you, Roy, what was the significance of that?" pointing to the tree.

"It gave me a chance to place myself between you and danger. It was precious in that, though I always regretted the necessity."

"Some time I shall tell you a little story—a dream—a waking dream, in which it has much significance. It placed you where I could look up, to see you."

"O!" coloring a little.

"You see that is a very important point—with a woman."

"O, it is?"

As they rode forward Roy told her that his father would ask her of the incidents of the last evening, he presumed.

"Yes, everybody is curious of your wooing, Roy. It is all sacred."

"And I did not know I was wooing," looking boyish.

"That was its charm. Do you remember what you said of the 'fall' this morning? Ruth compared you to the young Adam on that memorable first day at the pond."

"Ah, I see. Perhaps, had Eve been reared in Boston, the fall had been avoided, who knows?" Cora's answer was a laugh.

The Judge was on the lookout. His reception of Cora was so tender that tears were dropping from her eyes. Roy took the horses away, and for a time avoided Cora and the Judge. He had several reasons for that. There was a clump of haw trees, then in blossom, by the big spring, forty yards from the house, which made a perfumed shade, under which were some pleasant seats. When the girl was in walking array the Judge led her to one of these seats, where they remained in conference many minutes alone. Roy was near enough to hear a sort of cry of applause, and see his father shy his hat into the air, at some presumable catastrophe in Cora's story. The hat lodged on a limb beyond the Judge's reach, and the laughing girl recovered it for him with a garden rake.

Then they went to the house, where the Judge showed the upper part of it to Cora, and took her instructions as to certain changes, and he was charmed with her ready, practical good sense. She asked to be shown Roy's room, and was almost overcome when she stood on the never carpeted floor, and looked around the naked walls, and unfurnished appearance. She went to it from the Judge's sumptuously furnished apartment. She turned from it without a word. Ruth had told her of it, but she had formed no correct idea of its utter destitution. Her silence oppressed the Judge. It had never occurred to him before. The simple outdoor life and habits of the young hunter required little inside but shelter in

the night and light by day. He made haste to admit the fault and wrong done the young man, and for which his blame was mainly that he permitted it. A daily bath in the river, as the Judge said, was Roy's custom. A blanket in the corner, a deal table, with piles of books on the floor, were quite all that met the pained eyes of the promised bride. Life with her had been one of luxury for that day, and dependent upon all the known appliances of civilization till the advent into the Ohio woods; and she could not comprehend full life under such conditions. Then she went to visit Aunt Smith in her jungle. The poor old creature was heavy under the misapprehended words of the Judge of the night before, and was embarrassed by her presence. The true hearted girl would throw her arms about her, and kissed her skinny lips. "You see, Aunt, the 'down country chap' you were so afraid of is not to carry me off"

"So I heern tell on."

"Why, Aunt, what is the matter? You're not a bit glad. You look sad and worried. What is it?"

"Fer 'im I'm proper glad, an' fer you," a little moved.

"Well, what is it? Tell me, please. You love him."

"Everythin' luv'es 'im, not es you doos, but most es well."

"And don't you want to live with us all your days?"

"I'd live fer ye an' die fer ye. Wat kin a pore ole buddy do fer the likes o' ye?"

"And do you think that he—that Roy, that I would let you go away from here, old and helpless? Why, he spares the wild things sometimes."

"An' they luvs 'im thet much thet they comes an' lets 'im shoot 'em wen 'e will."

"Aunt, I love everything that he loves. I will cherish and keep all that is dear to

him. I remember what you said to me long ago. Henor I has a mother. You shall live with us, care for us, and be cared for by us. Does not that please you?"

"I've lived with the Major now nigh onto twenty year;" now greatly moved. "The Major sed ye'd be mistriss, an'—an'—" quite breaking down.

"He expected if I was, it would be to care for all, to love all, and, with the Lord's help, to bless all, in the dear old Castle. The change shall not be for the worse to a living thing."

"I se shore thet 'd be the way, an' I'm so glad."

"You are to be our dear aunty. You will have me to help you, and some young woman to do the heavy work."

"I dunno 'bout hevin a gal roun' yer."

"No, no, only me, for the beginning."

"Lor' bless yer purty face an' winnin' ways. 'E'll want ye som'ers else. Then ye must 'spect wat'll come to ye. Ye ain't thought o' thet. Gals never does."

"Then I shall want you all the more, Aunty," dropping her eyes and voice.

"Yis, I know all 'bout them thin's. Ye won't want to talkon'em. Ye won't tell Roy wat I sez?"

"No, Aunty," laughing, with the color filling the dainty cups in her cheeks at the thought.

"I'm so glad ye'r comin'. I was a little afeerd at wat the Major sed. Uv course ye'll hev yer way, an' yer way'll be right."

"My way will be the way he wants if I can find it out. He seems one not to tell his wants—he may not know his wants—nor to complain, though he suffers;" she said with a look which asked.

"Thet's 'im. No more complainin' 'n a speckle fawn; an' the Major no more thinks o' his feelin's 'n so 'e was a cub; an' 'e goes

roun' sayin' nothin' an' no one to care for 'im. You'll be a angil to 'im."

"Yes, you dear old aunty, we will make a new life for him."

"Lor! thar wun't be much 'e'll want uv my doin'. An' the Major—pore. lonesome ole man, ye'll cum from the Lord to 'im, an' make 'is life new fer 'im. The hull place wants ye; an' ye'll be light an' sunshine to it, an' rule it in luv 'n sweetness."

Cora heard her in surprise, and tears came to her eyes as she finished. The duties and destinies of her future life at the Castle had not before been so impressively brought to her quick apprehension. She pressed the old oracle of hope in her arms, and being told about the dinner, she promised to come back and make some rolls for the Judge, and then she went out to meet the expectant Roy.

She found him and his father in the grounds where the rank June grass was being mowed for the first time. There she visited the little bed where grew the Indian girl's moccasins, surrounded and mingled with other varieties of forest plants and flowers. Then she wanted to see the rose tree from which her offering of the night before was taken, which she examined with care. The grounds had many flowering shrubs. There were humming birds and bees and butterflies, and many forest birds. The warm air was laden with perfume, and filled with overflowing life. Cora remembered her promise to Aunty Smith, and told Roy he might go with her.

"Happy youth!" sighed the Judge, "but my solace will appear at dinner time."

"Ye allus brings the sunshine," said the old woman, "an' now 'e'll cum wen ye'r in, an' cum to talk about ye wen ye ain't," with a grim sort of a smile.

"Ah, Aunty, you know how it will be, don't you?" was his comment.

"Everybody kin tell 'ow it'll be, till it's an ole story," she answered.

"An old story! Do you hear her, Cora?" with an incredulous smile, exclaimed Roy.

She removed her frills and pulled off her rings, which she gave the young man to hold, with a bright look, and turned to the bowl with the flour and other things ready to her hand. Roy was standing by her, when he asked what she thought of the old woman's statement. There was just a little tremulous motion of the curls on her head, and a vibration of the pendants in the small ears, and the dimples played an instant in the warm cheeks, and that was her answer.

"Ye'r a glorious pair to look on," said Aunt. "Seems zif yer buty could never fade. 'Twon't go with the roses, wen the summer ends. Ye'll be 'ansome wen I die; an' little ones 'll be roun' ye. Yer luv never 'll—grow ole." The thin old voice quavered with emotion. Cora turned aside, perhaps that a tear might not fall into her bowl. Roy went to the lonely woman's side, saying tenderly: "Aunt, did you miss this glory of life?"

"I knows thet luv comes from God, and don't never die," was her answer, shaken like a withered leaf.

"Roy, kiss her for both of us," said Cora with still averted face.

The injunction was piously obeyed, and drawing a handkerchief from his bosom, he returned to the agitated girl's side, and tenderly removed the drops from her eyes and cheeks, and was rewarded with an exquisite thrill of thanks from her otherwise mute red lips.

"Roy," she said a moment later, with her old gayety, "I won't warrant these rolls."

"Well, I will eat them all, if they fail."

"You had better face another panther," was her answer.

She was thoughtful and a little anxious for those rolls. She broke one at the dinner table. Her face lighted. "I was afraid they would be heavy and sentimental," she said.

"When they are light and celestial," responded Roy, laughing.

"Good heavens! Have the rolls and butter pats become emotional, with the rest of us?" asked the Judge, laughing also.

"Tender and melting, Papa Judge," answered the girl.

"Papa Judge! Is that to be my name? Do you hear that, Roy? Papa Judge! That will do," greatly pleased.

"If so please you. You see these rolls were made under—shall I say inspiration, even embarrassment?"

"O, Roy was present in the laboratory, I see."

There was a little scene in the Judge's room toward evening, when the young pair started on their return through the forest. Roy presented her his mother's watch, in gold and blue enamel, the dial set round with diamonds. He merely came to her and silently placed the thin gold chain about her neck, and as her eyes opened in wide response—"We both wish it, please," was all he said.

The Judge then produced from a small, quaint, old time case, two rings, one with a moderate sized brilliant, and the other a plain gold band. "This," said he, exhibiting the diamond, "was my pledge to his mother, now twenty-five years ago. Let me see him place it upon your finger, Cora, as his pledge and your acceptance." When that was performed—"And this, he said, handing her the other, "she gave me. It has long been too small for my hand. Place it on his. And now," when it was upon his finger, "my blessing must be added to your father's." He sealed it with a kiss on the weeping child's brow. Then he turned and

walked out of the room, and we will go with him.

As the long shadows from the western trees stole over the bordering field, and the song birds were piping their vespers, Cora and her affianced rode slowly out of the forest across the interlaced gold and shade. The young man, at Cora's request, bore the bear lance for his defense on his return. He carried it with the head of the shaft resting on his right foot, the lance blade gleaming in the sun. The figure, tall and slender, mounted on the bony, powerful horse, and by his side the supple form of the girl, in the close fitting blue and gold, on her lithe palfrey, with the golden chain about her neck, and the solitaire flashing on her ungloved hand.

"See! see!" cried Ruth to the assembled household. "A veritable young knight and a high born maiden come riding to us from the forest, out of the heart of a story of old chivalry." There was emotion in her voice and a half formed tear in her eye, as the picture of her fancy was realized to her vision.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FALLING CURTAIN.

Cora named the anniversary of the first meeting between Roy and herself, on that memorable September afternoon, by the little lake, for her wedding. Great preparations were made for the occasion. As there would inevitably be a company to witness the ceremony, it was decided that it should be performed in the open air, and accordingly a rustic stand, artistically constructed and decorated, was set up against the wall of the house, on a level with the upper step into the main entrance; and so near that one could step from that upon it, and large enough to

hold the family groups. It had an exit from the opposite side. A majordomo was brought from Cleveland, to take charge of the ample commissariat of the Castle for the occasion, and tables were set up in the grounds.

The Judge sent special invitations to all his surviving comrades in arms, within reach of the mails, whose addresses were known to him; and every settler within fifteen or twenty miles was bidden. There were many from Cleveland, Newburg, Painesville, Chardon, Warren, Burton, Ravenna, Parkman, Hudson, Mantua, Ashtabula—names conspicuous in Northern Ohio sixty years ago, and in the histories of the pioneers. All within accessible distances came.

Everybody knew the Judge. All had heard of Roy, and many had seen him, and were familiar with his hunting exploits. Very few had ever seen the bride. The fame of her beauty and grace, her reputation for wise good sense, had gone out, and been spoken of in the log cabins, through a wide extent.

A clergyman came on from Hudson to officiate on the occasion. The ceremony was to be performed at two, so that those within a distance to come and return ere deepest night should fall in the woods, might do so.

The day had the ripe splendor of summer, with the temperature the color of autumn. From mid forenoon through all the forest paths and trails came the eager guests. The more remote came the day before, the whole or a part of the way. They assembled, as hearty and hardy a gay and joyous throng as the woods of that wild and beautiful region had ever beheld or were to see.

At the exquisite moment the young pair came down the stairway, passed the doorway, unattended, and took their place upon the platform, in front of the circle of friends.

All tender brides are lovely. To those nearest her, Cora was never so beautiful. To strangers her loveliness surpassed the fame

of it. So tender in her downcast manner, such sweet and unreserved dedication did it express, that all the women and many men were unconsciously overcome. Knowing and seeing only the arm which sustained her, the side to which she seemed to cling, going to the solemn act in that presence which consecrates the most sacred deeds of men.

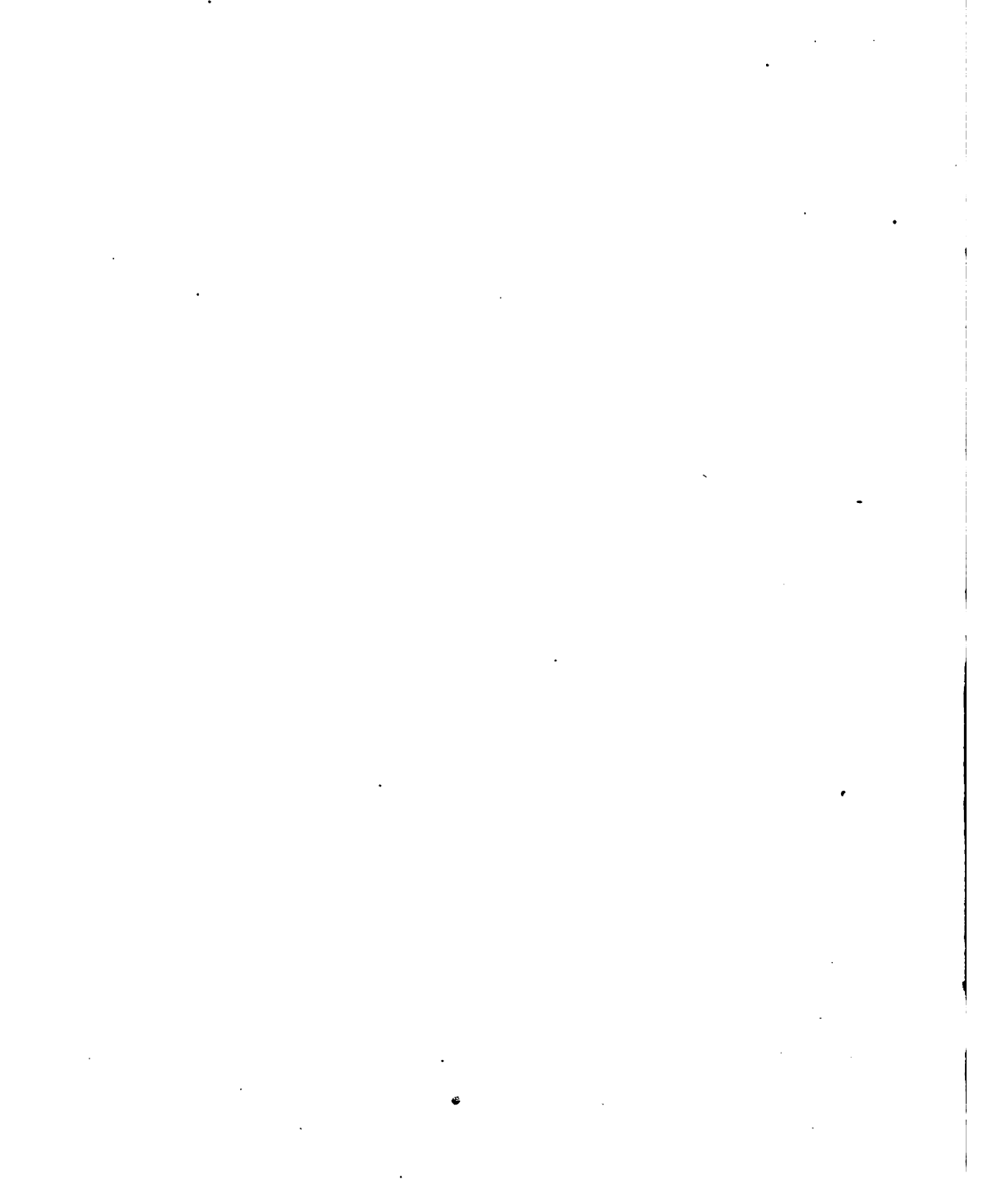
Few have eyes for a bridegroom. On this occasion he in a measure divided the gaze of the hundreds present. Slighter and more youthful than was the expectation of strangers, the first look was one of disappointment. A second, and he was felt to be the peer of her who gave herself to his keeping.

They were in their places, and turned and bowed to the Puritan marriage service of their ancestors. The prayer went up, and the benediction was invoked. Cora lifted her face for her husband's kiss, was caught in the arms of Ruth, and turned for the embraces of her small circle of friends, while congratulations clustered around Roy.

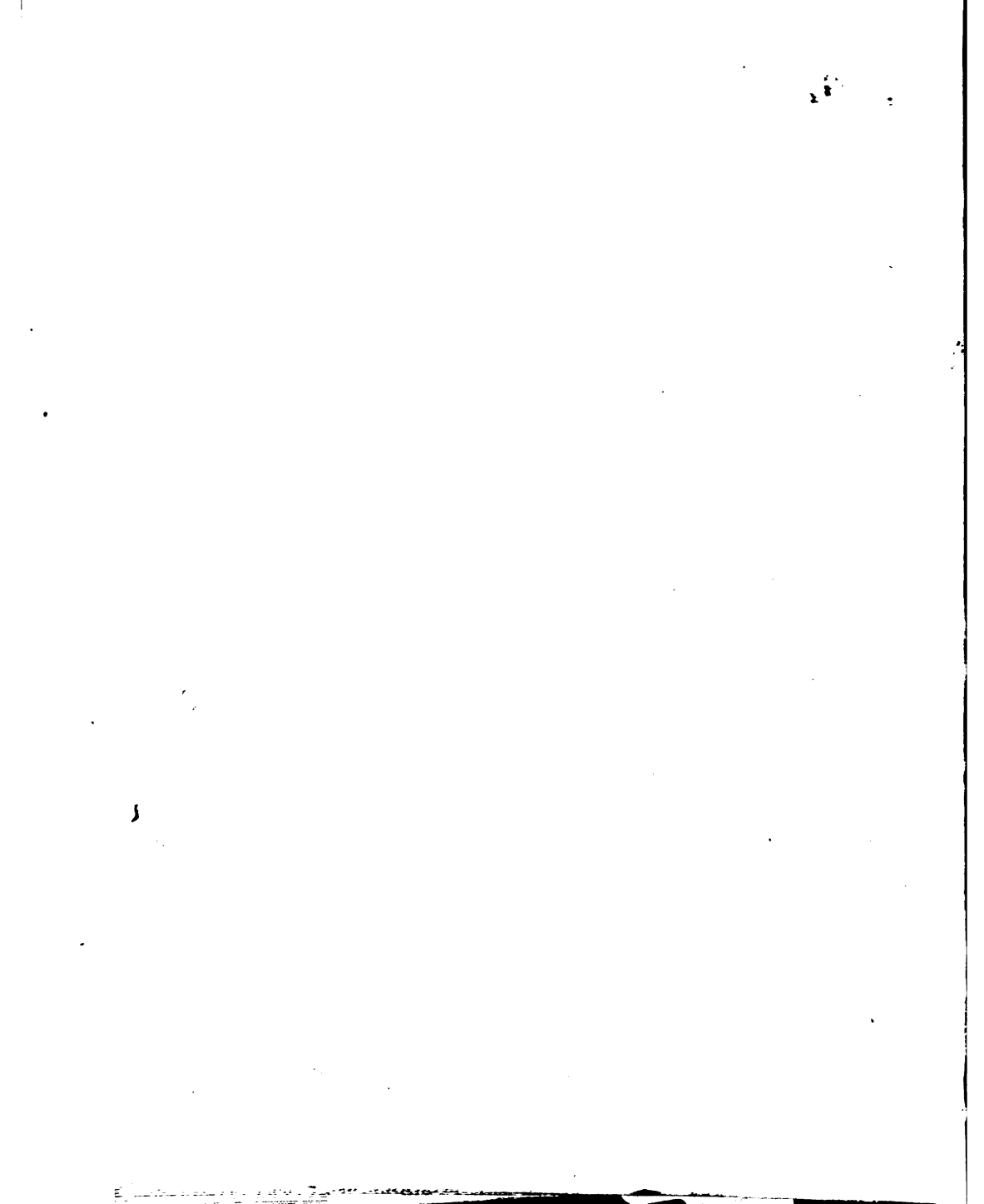
Then with Cora, her cheeks full of varying color, he led the way to the principal table.

The light of that day dies, the voices of joy and revelry become mute, the curtain descends, and nothing but these dim outlines, these shadows and echoes of the past, remain to us.

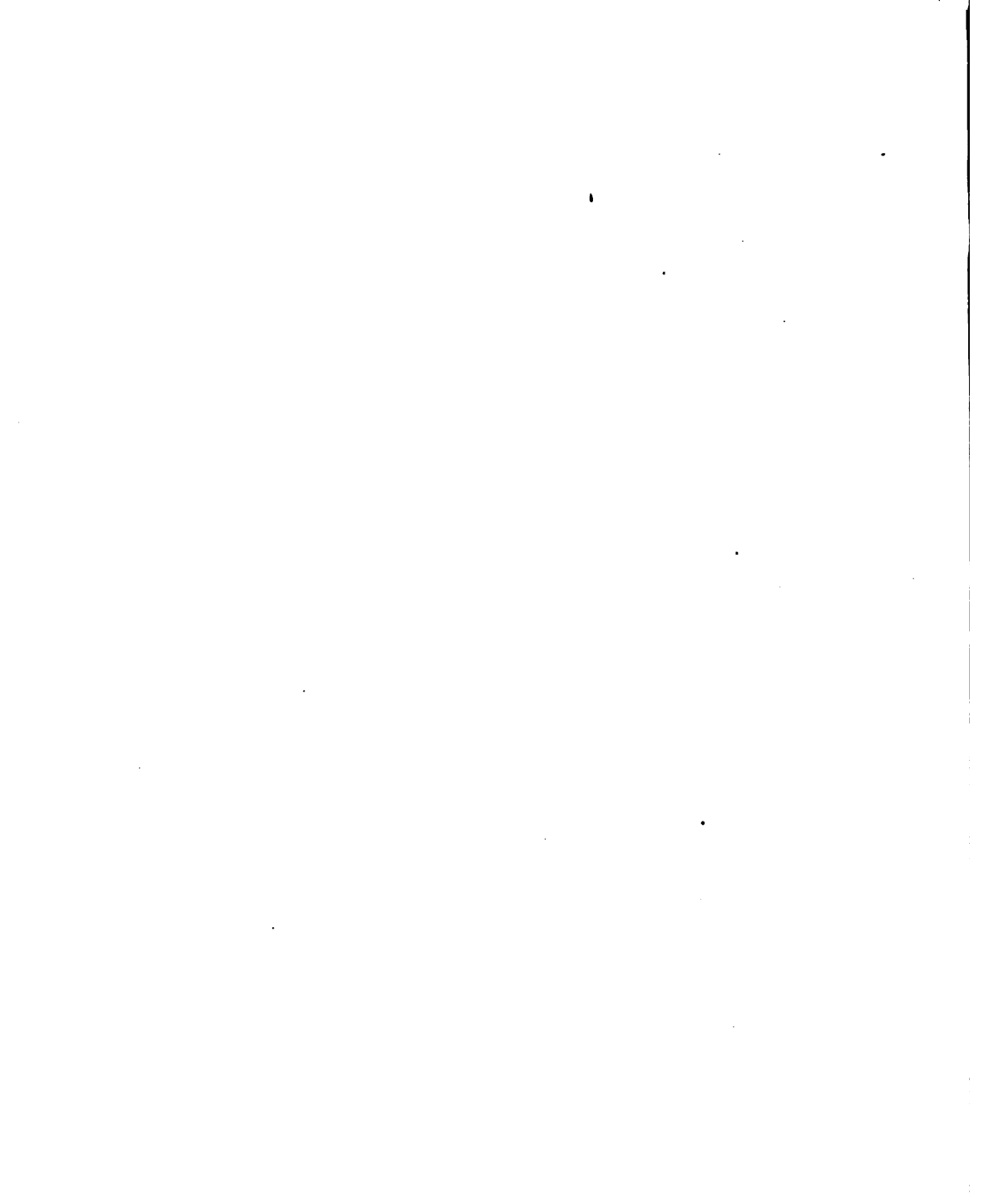
THE END.













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